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# HORACE VERNON;

OR,

## FASHIONABLE LIFE.

"Were we to take as much pains to be what we ought, as we do to disguise what we *are*, we might appear like ourselves, without being at the trouble of any disguise at all."—ROCHEFOUCAULT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

PHILADELPHIA:

LEA AND BLANCHARD,

SUCCESSORS TO CAREY & CO.

.....  
1839.



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# HORACE VERNON.

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## CHAPTER I.

"Thou Julia, thou hast metamorphosed me ;  
Made me neglect my studies—lose my time—  
War—with good counsel—set the world at naught."

"Sir, you are most welcome to our house :  
It must appear in other ways than words,  
Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy."

WHEN Vernon left the banking-house, he had no distinct idea in his own mind of any operation by which he should be able to raise anything like the sum required by the exigencies of the firm ; but the excitement caused by his conversation with Warkworth, and the confidence which had been infused into both parties by the remembrance that he had before raised very large sums at a few hours' notice speedily evaporated. Vernon felt that he was not the man that he had been—that he had not the pliable materials to work upon, which had once been at his command ; and even if he had, the sense of his own insecurity, and the fear lest he should at last betray the confidence of his friends, would have divested him of that necessary self-possession, and implied variety of resources, indispensable to one whose business it is to raise money without compromising his credit.

And now, for the first time, the doubt occurred to him—"if Robinson should not succeed in his attempt to get Hopwood to discount the bills!"—a circumstance by no means unlikely, if that gentleman should by any chance have been made acquainted with the run upon the house. Vernon shuddered as the thought presented itself to him. But that could not be after all; Robinson had waited upon Hopwood before he himself left Egham, and the thing would have been decided before this. At all events it was useless to think of looking after Robinson at present—he would see him that very night, if possible.

Vernon was a sanguine man, and never so much so as upon those dangerous occasions, when it was of the last importance that his hopes should be realized, occasions upon which men of a more discreet and provident nature feel the absolute necessity of having "two strings to their bow." And it might naturally be supposed, that in a case of extreme emergency like the present, even Vernon himself would have cast about for a second resource in the event of the other failing him. But he did not do so; on the contrary, although it certainly was his intention to wait upon a certain monied man at the west end of the town in the evening, he betook himself to the counting-house of perhaps the very last man in the city whom any body could reasonably expect him at such a moment to call upon.

The reader will doubtless remember, that in a previous chapter we furnished a brief account of Vernon's early acquaintance with Mr. Livingstone, and of the conduct of the latter towards him. It is proper now to mention, that Vernon being one of those men who cannot remain consistent or resolute even in their enmities, hearing two or three years after the marriage of Livingstone and Miss Marshall that the man was in difficulties, waited upon him, and offered him a certain amount of credit at the banking-house. Livingstone having partially retrieved himself, subsequently opened an account with Warkworth, Vernon and Co., and eventually, from over-speculation and other causes, became a bankrupt. His largest creditors by far were his friends, Messrs. Warkworth, Vernon, and Co., who were appointed assignees, and who, since it is quite true that *ex nihilo nihil fit*, were never in a situation to be able to declare a dividend.

By some strange association of ideas, which it would

occupy too much time, and which perhaps it would be impossible after all to explain, Vernon bethought himself at this moment of his unfortunate friend Livingstone. It may be—it is a consolation to a falling man—sometimes to visit those who have received obligations at his hands; not so much for the purpose of procuring sympathy, as of witnessing that deference which he fears he may in some short space hence behold for the last time.

However this may be, Vernon soon found himself at the door of a counting-house, on the second floor of a large old-fashioned house in Great St. Helen's. Mr. Livingstone was within, and too happy to see his friend and benefactor, and the single clerk was despatched to the West India docks for "those samples," in order that the gentlemen might enjoy their conversation in private.

"And to what may I attribute the pleasure of seeing Mr. Vernon?" said Livingstone, blandly, after the first salutations were over. Can one so humble as myself be of the slightest service? If so, pray command me."

"No, Livingstone, I thank you, no," replied Vernon; "I merely looked in to hear how you were getting on. How goes the world with you at present?"

"But poorly, sir, but poorly," said Livingstone, shaking his head; "the scarcity of money in the market." A glimpse of the earlier Livingstone was in his face at that moment, as he added with a smile—"not that if it were ever so abundant, I should stand much chance of getting any."

"Money is, indeed, scarce at present; we find it so in our house," remarked Vernon. "Should this state of things continue, Heaven knows what will be the consequence."

"By-the-bye, Vernon," said Livingstone, suddenly grown more familiar, "pardon me if I touch upon a disagreeable topic; but I *did* hear this morning a circumstance that surprised—I may say distressed me; let me hope there is no truth in it, a run upon —"

"Our house," interrupted Vernon; "it is true to a certain extent. There is no accounting for these things, and it is impossible to guess who may be the next run upon; there is one comfort, we do not fear the issue."

"True, true," said the other, "*you* have no cause, I am certain; but such things are awkward, nevertheless; nay, I do not know a house in London that would not feel it—

self more secure, by the loan of a few thousands. I wish, for my part, it were in my power to repay in part the obligations I feel myself under to you, my dear friend, by such an offer."

"Well, I believe you are sincere," returned Vernon; "and, to say the truth, some such temporary assistance might be of service to us at the present moment."

"My acceptance of any use?" suggested Livingstone. Vernon shrugged his shoulders.

"No, I fear not—I am afraid not," said Livingstone, musing, or appearing to do so; "there is *one thing*. With regard to myself," he continued, "I am not much interested in mercantile affairs;—her property you know —"

"Whose?" inquired Vernon, abstractedly.

"Mrs. Livingstone's; you know her settlement of six hundred a year, which you refused to take, although she herself wished to give it up, when I was made a bankrupt."

"O, I remember," said Vernon.

"Now, do you know how you could make two people happy?" said Livingstone, after a prolonged pause, "by coming to dine with us to-day, if you are not particularly engaged; Mrs. Livingstone would be so delighted to see you; indeed she has often thought it very unkind of you, that you should so entirely have forgotten your old friends."

"My dear fellow," cried Vernon; but he could not proceed. He was fairly dumb-founded by excess of surprise, a degree of which the reader will probably feel, when he remembers, as Vernon did, the manner in which his "old friends" had some years ago conducted themselves towards him.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Vernon;" said Livingstone, and he attempted to look as one under the influence of an amiable excitement, and succeeded in doing so. "I'll tell you what I'll do," he repeated, "that is, if you approve of it, and will accompany me to Newington Green, where we now live;—I'll prevail upon Mrs. Livingstone to assign her settlement to you, for a few months, if it will be of any service. This, I am sure, she will be most happy to do, for you cannot imagine the respect and esteem she always expresses for you. My own obligations to you, Vernon, I can never forget, upon my soul I

can't; excuse me," and at this moment Mr. Livingstone buried his face in his pocket-handkerchief; but whether to conceal his emotion, or the fact of its absence, we must not presume to say.

Vernon was deeply moved by this instance of his friend's generosity. If any sense of bitterness or hostility had remained in his bosom, consequent upon Livingstone's conduct to him in former years, it had been dissipated in that moment. He wrung Livingstone's hand with much fervor, and expressed, in the warmest terms, his sense of the other's noble behavior; to which Livingstone returned suitable and repeated acknowledgments.

"If I could be certain," resumed Vernon, "that Mrs. Livingstone would be happy to see me, I myself should be glad to pay my respects to her; but —"

"Happy!" interrupted Livingstone, "she would be delighted. Indeed, you don't know what a favorite you are in that quarter. We shall feel honored by your company."

The clerk returned at this moment.

"Well, it is time that we should go now," said Livingstone; "we dine at half-past-four; a plain joint, nothing more. The Stamford Hill stage goes from the Flower-pot, over the way. We keep no carriage now," he added with a sigh.

"You must let me off early," said Vernon, taking his hat, "for I have a great deal to do yet before to-morrow morning."

"Business at the banking-house, I presume," said Livingstone.

"Oh no, not that—all is arranged there for the present. Were it otherwise, do you think I could be absent for a moment?"

"True, true," said Livingstone thoughtfully, as he locked a small iron safe, and put the key in his pocket. "Come, let us be gone," and they proceeded to the Flower-pot, and took possession of two seats in the Stamford Hill stage.

And while these two gentlemen are on their way to Newington-green, let us communicate the hopes, the thoughts, and the speculations of each.

Livingstone perfectly well knew, or at the least believed, that there was no chance of the house of Warkworth and Vernon suffering from the panic just then commencing. The easy-unconstrained, and perfectly tranquil manner and

appearance of Vernon, favored this conviction; and the words he had dropped upon leaving the counting-house, to the effect that had any thing been wrong his presence would necessarily be indispensable, confirmed him in his notion. Now Mr. Livingstone was sufficiently well acquainted with Vernon's nature, to be aware that any favor conferred upon him, Vernon would hereafter gladly return in a tenfold porportion; and he accordingly offered him the assignment of his wife's property—in the fullest hope, or rather in the best defined belief, that by such present sprat he should be able to catch some future salmon. Besides, he was well acquainted with Vernon's good opinion of him, which he had indeed taken some pains, at the period of his bankruptcy to establish; the offer of relinquishment of his wife's property upon that occasion, being merely a *ruse*, contrived by that lady and himself; being convinced, as they both were, that it would not be accepted, or that even if it were, the trustees had received a previous caution not to give it up, which they had a perfectly legal right to do.

On the other hand, Vernon, although highly pleased by the apparent gratitude of Livingstone, was by no means insensible of the value of the money so handsomely tendered to him, particularly at this critical moment; and if he did not with a proper degree of conscientiousness apply himself to the consideration of how it was to be repaid within a certain time, yet it must at least be urged in his favor, that he never contemplated the non-return.

The coach, in due time, stopped at a large, but somewhat dusky looking tenement, which appeared formerly to have been a mansion on Newington-green; and the friends got out, Mr. Livingstone obsequiously leading the way through an "o'er-weeded garden," or fore court, which might have supplied groundsel and chickweed for all the birds in the neighborhood.

"If you will be so kind as to wait in this parlor for a few minutes," said Livingstone, opening the door of a parlor, "I will prepare Mrs. Livingstone to receive you. The poor creature is so nervous and indisposed, that I fear the sudden appearance of an old and valued friend might prove too much for her weak spirits."

Vernon bowed, and took a seat, and, in point of fact, was not sorry for the opportunity afforded to himself of regaining his composure. He could not have believed till

now, that the prospect of seeing the woman who had wronged and insulted him, and whom he thought he had long ago brought himself to regard with indifference, could have so moved and unnerved him. He did not then know, that no length of time will altogether efface impressions which are perhaps the stronger in proportion to the haste with which they have been received; and that of all impressions, those of love, and first love, are the most powerful.

While he thus sat absorbed in his own reflections, a boy of about ten years of age stole unperceived into the apartment, and placed himself before him; a seasonable cough, which lads have always at command when they desire to attract attention, caused Vernon to open his eyes, and to direct them towards the child, who stood with all that ominous, overdone bashfulness, which betokens a speedy scrambling upon the visiter's knee, a derangement of his neck-cloth, an attempted abstraction of his watch, and a digital scrutiny of his waistcoat pockets.

"And who are you, my fine little fellow?" said Vernon, patting the boy upon the head. "What's your name?"

"Oh! my name's Henry Livingstone, and papa sent me in here to make my bow, and to ask the gentleman how he did."

Vernon was more surprised than pleased by this inroad. It is true he was aware that Livingstone had a large family, but he was not prepared for the sudden appearance of this representation of the juvenile *corps*. It was not so much the sight of the boy; but *such* a boy! The lad was in truth an ungainly little fellow enough; he had a round face, a snub nose, large ears, and hair of a singular depth of color, and of a color which has not yet obtained extensive popularity, for it was red. His *tout-ensemble*, indeed, accorded but ill with a certain image of beauty which Vernon had the moment before been conjuring up.

At this instant, however, a rustling was heard in the passage, and Livingstone entered the room, leading forward his wife, who approached in a flutter of agitation, and placed her hand in that of the banker.

A few half-uttered words on all sides, and they were seated. Each felt a degree of awkwardness and constraint, which could not fail of being recognised by all. Mr. Livingstone whispered his eldest son to withdraw,



which the boy effected in the usual ungracious manner of lads who expect "assurances of high consideration," from the visitor. Mrs. Livingstone selected the never-failing topic of the weather, and Vernon politely assented according to the rule in such cases made and provided. At length the entrance of a servant, who announced dinner, operated as a timely relief to the party, and Livingstone led the way to an opposite room, followed by Vernon and the lady.

The dinner passed off like all other dinners in one sense, for it came in course of time to an end; but it was by no means so lively and pleasant a dinner as might have been expected to be enjoyed by such "old friends." Livingstone indeed strove to interest his guest, by introducing topics of business, and thence deviating into political questions, the state of the nation, our foreign and domestic policy; but Vernon returned brief replies, and seemed hardly disposed to sift these various matters thoroughly at that moment; whilst Mrs. Livingstone was full of apologies for the plainness of the dinner. She was sure Mr. Vernon was so unused to that sort of thing; she was so sorry she had nothing better to offer him; it was very kind of him to drop in in so friendly a way—hoped the next time they should be better prepared, and the like; to all which, the banker made suitable replies, protesting that a plain dinner was his delight; that he was accustomed to it at home; that nothing could be better; that he would drop in oftener; and that he requested no preparation should be made for him; a large portion of all which statement it must be stated, was sheer hypocrisy on both sides, for Vernon was by no means averse to the good things of this life, and accordingly shuddered at what is called a plain dinner, and had resolved at the moment in his own mind, that Mrs. Livingstone should never see his face again.

Very shortly after the wine was placed upon the table, Mrs. Livingstone retired to the drawing-room, and left the two gentlemen together, who, lovers equally of the bottle, soon began to indemnify themselves, for their previous sufferings by copious libations.

"Vernon," said Livingstone, at the expiration of the second bottle, "I keep no butler now, and must go myself for more wine. Had I not better take this opportunity of speaking to Mrs. Livingstone touching that little matter? Perhaps you would prefer that I should break

the subject to her in private? We can afterwards talk it over together."

"Why I should, certainly," replied Vernon, "and I am sensible of the delicacy of the offer."

Livingstone gave a significant nod, and retired from the apartment, and having brought some more wine, and placed it on a convenient sideboard, walked up stairs to the drawing-room, where he found his lady leisurely sipping from a tumbler some brandy and water, to which she had, of late years, in a small way applied herself, it being deemed "good for her complaint." The following conversation took place between the exemplary couple:—

"When is he coming up?" inquired Mrs. Livingstone.

"Oh, not yet, you may be sure of that," replied the husband; "he likes the wine too well for that, depend upon it."

"But, Mr. Livingstone," said the lady, "you have not told me yet, what could induce you to bring the man here. You know I can't bear strangers, and besides to be caught in such a pickle, and such a dinner to be set before him; it was wrong Mr. Livingstone."

"Stuff!" said the husband; "he don't mind that; and, besides, he can be of service to us, and I have him in right cue just now, I can tell you."

"Indeed!—well, if that's the case," said Mrs. Livingstone, with a pleasing smile, as she concluded her brandy and water: "of course we are glad to see him, Mr. Livingstone —"

"Yes; but we must do something for him," said the husband; "we must confer an obligation on him first."

"I do not understand what you mean."

"Why, Mrs. Livingstone, 'tis a long story, and you know nothing of business; so I shan't tell you much about it. He would be glad of a few thousands for a month or two; and I have promised him that you will consent to assign your settlement to him for that time."

"Good God! Livingstone, how mad you must be to do any thing of the kind! The only thing we have to depend upon! What's to become of the children—the children, sir? I dare say! I am not going to do anything of the kind;—not I, Mr. Livingstone."

"You are talking like a fool, as usual," said Livingstone; "do you think I would let him have the money, if I didn't know it was as safe as the Bank? What's to become of the children? Why, I'll get him to find places

for them, you may take my word for that. Here's Henry, nearly old enough for a good birth, and the others will follow in due succession."

"Well, but do you think it *quite* safe in his hands?" remonstrated Mrs. Livingstone, with as much earnestness as she dared to assume before her husband.

"Pshaw!—safe!" said the other tauntingly; "and I'll tell you what, madam—it would be well that you should be as civil and polite to Vernon as possible; compliment him—flatter him;—you know his weak points;—and when I bring him up stairs, have the letter ready, authorising the trustees to transfer the stock to him—do you hear? But I must return—he'll wonder what detains me so long." So saying, Mr. Livingstone closed the door, and returned to his friend.

"Well," said he, as he decanted another bottle of wine, and pushed it towards Vernon, "I have arranged every thing with Mrs. Livingstone. You do not know the pleasure she feels in being able to do you this trifling service; but, as I told you before, you are no small favorite in that quarter."

Vernon made all proper acknowledgments, and the two friends insensibly slid into more unrestrained and familiar conversation.

"By the bye," said the banker at length, "is it not time that we should join Mrs. Livingstone? I must be early in town, and it is now nine o'clock."

Livingstone, as the bottle was out, readily acquiesced, and the two gentlemen found their way up stairs into the presence of the lady, with faces not flushed beyond the decent after-dinner standard.

"My love," said Mr. Livingstone, as he took an offered cup of coffee, "our friend Vernon has, as I have told you, consented to do us the favor of permitting us to be of trifling service to him for a few months."

"Oh, I am so happy!—indeed, Mr. Vernon," replied the lady, turning towards him with a fascinating smile, "there is nothing—nothing in the world that Mr. Vernon could ask, which we should not feel ourselves under an obligation to accede to." And so saying, with a profound curtsy, she gave him a folded letter addressed to two gentlemen in the city, whom the banker perfectly well knew.

"My dear madam," said Vernon, as having rapidly cast his eye over the contents of the letter, he placed it in

his pocket-book, "be assured I feel a proper sense of the obligation you have now conferred upon me. Not so much, permit me to say, in respect of the amount consigned to me, which, I assure you, may or may not be of service to me at this moment; but because it indicates a friendship, and a recollection of former intimacy on your part, which must ever continue to be a pleasing portion of my existence."

"Oh, do not say so!" sighed Mrs. Livingstone.

Vernon himself began to think, at the moment, that he might as well have held his peace about the past. "But," he added, "if it should ever be in my power to return the favor—and I think I may say it will be—I must particularly request you will command me."

"Not a word about that," said Livingstone; "we are both well assured of that."

"We are certain of that," chimed Mrs. Livingstone; and another sigh escaped her.

At this moment Mr. Livingstone abruptly quitted the apartment.

There was an unsatisfactory silence of some minutes, which Vernon did not exactly know how to break, but the lady relieved him.

"There have been great changes since we last had the pleasure of meeting,"

"Many indeed," said Vernon.

"And with very few of us for the better," said Mrs. Livingstone, with mournful earnestness.

"Indeed! I have been sorry—much concerned—to hear of your misfortunes," said Vernon with sympathy; and another pause ensued.

Had Vernon been merely a casual acquaintance of twelve years ago, he would not, as he gazed on her, have recognised in Mrs. Livingstone the Miss Marshall—the beautiful girl—of former days. She was, indeed, so much altered that very few traces remained of her earlier loveliness; only that one undefinable expression which had originally captivated Vernon, and which, to the eye of a lover, no change can destroy.

"I hope you have at least been happy," said Vernon, with tenderness. "Fortune cannot altogether deprive us of happiness, although she may deny wealth."

"Alas! no," replied Mrs. Livingstone, and she shed tears. "Oh, how little are young girls competent to

judge of those, in whose hands they confide their happiness."

"My dear Mrs. Livingstone, I am shocked beyond measure to see you thus affected, said Vernon, softly. "Pray be composed."

"I will strive to be so," sighed Mrs. Livingstone. "Oh, Horace, it might have been otherwise!"

Vernon spoke not for some minutes. "It *might*, indeed, have been otherwise," he said at length, and he arose and walked towards the door.

"Oh, pardon my absence, it was quite unavoidable, I assure you," said Livingstone, entering the room as Vernon opened the door.

Vernon did not observe the look of malignant rage with which Mrs. Livingstone greeted her husband, who was also spared that pleasure.

"Nay, I must really go," said Vernon, as Livingstone made some officious attempts to detain him. I bargained to be permitted to retire early this evening; when I repeat my visit —"

"You shall stay longer with us," said Livingstone.

"But must you really leave us?" said the lady, with a pleading pressure of the hand.

"My dear, he must," said Livingstone, somewhat sharply. "Wait, I'll get a light; why is the lamp not lighted in the hall? Where's Mary?" and Livingstone hurried from the room.

"Good night, Horace," said Mrs. Livingstone, and she looked up into his face with the eyes of earlier days.

"You *will* come again soon—will you?"

"I will," said Vernon. "God bless you, Emily!"

"And you, Horace! and you!" she added, and she drew him towards her.

Vernon almost broke away; and encountered Livingstone in the passage, bade him a hasty good night, shook hands, and hurried into the road.

As he rode back to the city, Vernon's heart almost smote him for the apparent coldness of his manner when he took leave of Mrs. Livingstone. He could plainly see that the woman still loved him, and he feared that she was harshly treated by Livingstone; and the memory of former years oppressed him with a feeling of pity, of compassion, of something deeper, perhaps, which he had not thought ever again in this world to experience.

It was too late to return to Egham that night, and, as he paid the coachman his fare, the weight of gold in his purse reminded him of a chance in another quarter. Vernon was a man, as we have shown, of excitable temperament, and incapable of resisting his passions. He got into a hackney-coach, therefore, and was driven to No. —, St. James's-street.

## CHAPTER II.

"My conscience bath a thousand several tongues,  
And ev'ry tongue brings in a several tale,  
And ev'ry tale condemns me."

VERNON arose in unaccustomed high spirits on the following morning, and having despatched a hasty breakfast in the coffee-room, made the best of his way to the office of Mr. Robinson.

He found that gentleman actively engaged, as usual, in his professional avocations. There was, however, a rather decent-looking man in the office, who seemed waiting, hat in hand, for an opportunity of further conversation with the solicitor.

As soon as Mr. Robinson beheld his patron, which, so absorbed had he been in the business before him, it was some minutes before he had leisure to do, he started to his feet with obsequious rapidity.

"God bless my soul, Mr. Vernon! how remiss! how negligent! I really beg your pardon!" and he turned towards the stranger—"Mr. Jeffries, I wish you would be so good as to call again this afternoon; I have most particular business with this gentleman. Will you excuse me for the present?"

"Oh, certainly," said Jack Jeffries; "I will look in again at four o'clock;" and he was about to take his leave.

"I think I have had the pleasure of seeing you before," said Vernon, addressing Jeffries; "although I quite forget the occasion of our meeting."

Mr. Robinson's visage assumed an expression of interest not altogether unmingled with anxiety.

"I once had the honor of waiting upon you," replied

Jeffries, "in the case of Mr. Ratcliffe, formerly a clerk of yours —"

"Oh, I remember," said Vernon; "and pray what is become of my poor friend Ratcliffe?"

"Why, sir," said Jeffries, assuming a professional air, "we had a great deal of trouble with Mr. Ratcliffe. I took an interest in him, sir,—a private interest, apart from the accident of his being my client; and myself and certain other friends of the poor man—he was a worthy man, sir—obtained him a situation in Nova Scotia, where, I think I may say, he is getting on very well, at this present moment."

"I am very glad to hear it," said the banker; and Mr. Jeffries, making a polite bow to Vernon, and his former master, gracefully arranged his hat on one side of his head, passed his fingers through his hair on the other, turned on his heel, and went his way to the Crown and Cushion, where his friend Hunsman, with a well-filled pipe, and a pot of ale was awaiting him.

"A clever young man that—a very clever young man," said Robinson; "formerly a clerk of mine, Mr. Vernon. But young men will be ambitious. He didn't know when he was well off—made a mistake—had no connection—and now wants to return to his old master —"

"Indeed!" said Vernon, paying but little attention to this narrative:

"Yes, sir,—yes," said Robinson, with an important air; I am too indulgent, I fear—too tender-hearted for my profession. The world requires us to be stones, flints, and rock; but I can't—I can't. Could I see the man starve before my eyes—under my very nose, I may say, with a wife about to become a mother for the ninth time; with no prospect before them but the workhouse?—five ounces of bread, and one ounce of cheese, for adults—God knows what for the infants—husband and wife literally torn asunder—disgraceful badge stuck here—just here—where the heart ought to be. Ugh!—I can't bear the thought of it—I *must* take him back again —"

"These sentiments do you honor," said Vernon, addressing the back of Robinson's head, who, with averted face, and in a state of much agitation, was writhing about in his chair; "and if the young man is, as you say, clever, and worthy also —"

"Oh—worthy!—worthy!" cried Robinson, looking up



over his shoulder; "as worthy a creature as ever put pen to parchment: and I could wish that he had never left me; but it is not in my nature to injure any human being, or I could have ruined him—I could have destroyed him, sir—in his profession ———"

"Well, but touching business, Robinson," said Vernon, somewhat impatiently: "I am in great haste this morning: I have a great deal to attend to. Have you done any thing with Hopwood?"

"God bless my soul! do forgive me, I beg of you?" cried Robinson. "My feelings hurried me away. I had, I am ashamed to say, forgotten every thing at the moment but that poor man. Well, sir,"—and he assumed an expression of serene pleasure;—"we have managed that little matter. I found Mr. Hopwood, as indeed, I have ever found him, the perfect gentleman. He was too happy to oblige Mr. Vernon. See here, sir, I have a cheque for the amount, less the discount; and he presented it to the banker gracefully."

"Well, Robinson, I am very glad you have done it," said Vernon; "and I am much obliged, I assure you, for your exertions. You will be pleased to debit my account with the same amount that Mr. Hopwood has done the bills at. Nay, not a word,—it shall be so. I perceive he has charged three-and-a-half per cent.,—it is quite fair. I owe you 262*l.* 10*s.*, which you can have whenever you please."

"Mr. Vernon,—Mr. Vernon," said Robinson, with watery eyes, "you will overwhelm me with kindness; you will, indeed sir. You are too generous—too noble. How shall I ever repay your bounty? When shall I deserve it? Never."

Had Vernon been intimately acquainted with the internal moral arrangement of Mr. Robinson, he might probably have been of the same opinion. As it was, however, he soothed the excited philanthropist by assurances of his perfect friendship and esteem, and expressions of his conviction, that Mr. Robinson deserved much more than fortune had yet done for him; and taking his hat, he was about to depart.

"By the bye, Robinson," said he, as he put on his gloves, "do you think you could find me a purchaser for my box at Egham? I think of parting with it after this summer. I mean to live more in London for the future."

Indeed, I don't altogether like that neighborhood; and I have had an offer of a much sweeter place in Kent, near Tunbridge-Wells. Is it in your way? Do you think you could find me a purchaser for it?"

"Why, any thing is in my way, and this amongst the rest," returned the solicitor; "and I have no doubt I can easily get somebody to take it off your hands. But I wonder you should wish to part with it—so delightful a retreat, after the fatigues of business. But, stop!—Well that is most extraordinary! I called at your house, sir, after I had completed my business with Mr. Hopwood, yesterday; in the expectation and hope of seeing you; but the ladies told me you had been summoned suddenly to town; and there I had the pleasure of seeing Captain Laurence. I think I may venture to call him your future brother-in-law. Charming young lady, Miss Charlotte, certainly!"

"Well," said Vernon coldly, "and what of Captain Laurence?"

"Oh, we had a long ramble in your delightful garden; and we were talking about the place: we both thought it a perfect little paradise: and the captain was saying, if you should ever think of parting with it, how happy should he be to become the proprietor."

"Aye, indeed!" said Vernon, surprised—a sudden recollection of the captain's regiment being ordered abroad, flashing through his memory.

"Yes, he did, indeed," said Robinson; but at that moment a thought equally unpleasant shot through the brain of the solicitor—that thought being, that if Captain Laurence really did purchase the perfect little paradise, he (Mr. Robinson) would lose the commission he expected to obtain upon the sale of it. Inwardly cursing, therefore, his officious communicativeness, he hastened to quash any impression his words might have created, and added, "but I dare say the captain spoke without really intending any thing. He would have mentioned it to you if he had, when you have spoken, as I dare say you have, of parting with it."

"Very likely," said Vernon; "but we will talk of this another time—I am in a hurry now; good morning."

Vernon had left the room, and was making his way through the clerk's office, when Mr. Robinson ran after him and seized him by the sleeve.

"What a head I have," said he; "I can remember nothing, now-a-days! will you be so kind as to step back with me for one moment only?"

The banker obeyed; but not perhaps with the best grace in the world.

"I have a message to deliver to you," said the solicitor, "which I declare had slipped my memory—a message from a lady"—he added with a leer which intended to be jocose.

"A lady, Mr. Robinson; whom do you mean?"

"A lady," said the other, with a very serious countenance, "who takes your recent unkindness to her very much to heart; a lady who is very much to be pitied.—I am sure I sympathise with her from my very soul!"

"You mean Mrs. Maxwell, probably," said Vernon.

"I do, sir; I was passing her door yesterday on my return to town, when she beckoned to me from the window, and conjured me, if I valued her peace of mind, to acquaint you that she wished most particularly to see you, if only for a few minutes, and on business of importance. I promised to do so; and yet, as you see, I had almost omitted to mention it—a fault of the head, not of the heart, sir—for I protest I have a great respect for Mrs. Maxwell. But I have so many things to attend to —"

"Did Mrs. Maxwell inform you of the business on which she wished to see me?" inquired Vernon.

"She did, professionally," said Robinson, "but she requested me not to mention it to you; she would wish to pour it into your own ear. I may, however, state that you have it in your power to do her a most essential, a most incalculable service at this juncture."

"I will see her once more!" said Vernon, half speaking to himself.

"Do you promise that you will see her?" said Mr. Robinson, who had heard the previous part of the sentence; "one word—your word is sufficient—may she hope to see you?"

"I will see her this evening, Robinson," said the banker. "Once more, good morning."

"Good morning; God bless you!" said Robinson, with emotion; "there is no one who deserves it more."

"Who requires it more, rather"—thought Vernon as he left the house, a host of oppressive thoughts weighing

upon his heart—"yes, I will see her once more, and it *shall* be for the last time."

Getting into a hackney-coach he soon found himself at the office of Smither and Raven, the respectable stock-brokers of Throgmorton street, and the trustees of Mrs. Livingstone's property. The former gentleman was within, and, on the appearance of Vernon, rose from his seat with an expression of surprise, with which was mingled no small degree of pleasure.

Having read Mrs. Livingstone's note, which he did with some deliberation, it might have been observable, by a bystander, had there been one, that the surprise upon the countenance of the worthy man increased rapidly, whilst the pleasure seemed receding with at least equal velocity.

"Oh, certainly, it shall be attended to," said Mr. Smithers; "there can be no objection, I should think—none on my part, I'm sure. I'll just speak to my partner though—we must do these things in a business-like manner. Do you require it at this moment, Mr. Vernon?"

"Well," said the banker, with an indifferent air, "it might be as well that I should have it directly; for I have a destination for it, which I have explained to Mrs. Livingstone, which may possibly be of the utmost advantage to her interest; and the turn of the market just now is favorable.

"Excuse me for one moment, if you please," said Mr. Smithers, and he walked into the front counting-house.

"I see, sir," said he, returning almost immediately; for having heard of the run upon the banking-house the day before, he was naturally solicitous to know how affairs proceeded this morning; and accordingly on the instant that Vernon entered, had privately despatched a clerk to ascertain how things went on. "I see, sir," he continued, "you are anxious to be of service to Mrs. Livingstone in the disposal of her property for a time, to purposes which your many opportunities enable you to assure yourself will be profitable to her."

"Just so," said Vernon; "Livingstone is a very old friend of mine, and I have a great respect for Mrs. Livingstone also, whom I have likewise known for some years."

"Well, then, Mr. Vernon, suppose I give you a cheque for the amount at once, and hold this lady's letter as my

voucher," said Mr. Smithers, promptly; "your endorsement of the check will be sufficient. Shall it be so?"

"That will be just the thing," returned the banker; "and I shall take care to apprise Mrs. Livingstone of the promptness with which you have complied with her wishes."

"Oh, my dear sir, pray do not mention it," said the stockbroker, writing out a cheque for the amount, and handing it to Vernon. "I hope, sir, that your speculation will be a profitable one for the lady, and that I shall see this money returned in a short time with something to it—eh, sir?"

"No doubt of it," said Vernon, taking the cheque; "I very seldom fail in my speculations for others, at all events: whatever be the result, her capital at least is certain."

"Who dares doubt that?" said Mr. Smithers, with flattering emphasis. "By the way, Mr. Vernon, will you permit me to ask you a particular favor?"

"Certainly, I shall be most happy, if I have it in my power to grant it."

"I have a nephew, sir," said Mr. Smithers; "a very fine young man, just come to London from the north—the son of an unfortunate sister of mine. He wants a situation; I think, in your house, he would be likely to prove an acquisition."

"It shall be done," said Vernon; "I will make a note of it, and depend upon it I will send for him on the first vacancy."

"You are too kind, sir," said Smithers; "and I am sure if I should be, at any future time, in a situation to return —"

"Thank you, thank you," said the banker, cutting short his oratory, and with many bows on the part of the stock-broker, Vernon withdrew.

On his entrance into the private office of the banking-house, Vernon found Mr. Warkworth seated at his table, with a much more serene countenance and manner than he had expected to find in that gentleman.

"Here," said Vernon, handing him the two cheques, "here is something towards making good my word. You will find a trifle less than 40,000*l*."

Mr. Warkworth received them with greater indifference than Vernon was prepared to look for from his partner.

He took them into the shop, and committed them to one of the clerks.

"It is something, certainly," said he, resuming his seat; "but I fancy now it will hardly be required. The panic is abated; indeed, it began to subside shortly after you left me yesterday. It were, indeed, a strange circumstance, if the house of Warkworth and Co. could be for any length of time suspected, Mr. Vernon."

Vernon started. There was something unusual in the tone of Mr. Warkworth that grated harshly upon his ear.

"You speak, sir," said Vernon, with some asperity, "of the house of Warkworth and Co. The firm used to be, in my father's time, Vernon, Warkworth, and Vernon; and for my own part, I cannot remember when the name of Vernon was omitted. Certainly at no period when the name of Warkworth was known."

"That's all very true, sir," said Warkworth, coolly, "and I had a great respect for your father—a very great respect—but I must tell you, Mr. Vernon, that since you left the house yesterday, I have conferred with several gentlemen of the highest respectability; and they advise me that, unless matters take a very material change, the name of Vernon should no longer continue in the firm."

"And you dare tell me this?" said Vernon, rising, and approaching the old gentleman:—"with whom have you been conferring, and about what? My name shall no longer continue in the firm! We are partners, Mr. Warkworth, and it requires some more special circumstances than 'a conference with several gentlemen,' however highly respectable, to make me otherwise."

"Pray, my dear sir, be calm, and sit down, I implore you," cried Warkworth, alarmed; "what need of this agitation—this excitement? I was too hasty in saying that these gentlemen advised such an extreme measure; but really, Vernon, when I see how the bank has been conducted lately, I am naturally astonished and grieved—I may say frightened; I repeat sir, that the lengths to which you have gone, have positively paralysed me."

"What do you mean? I do not understand you," said Vernon.

"Why, my dear sir," said Warkworth, soothingly, "how can you suppose, that to a house like ours, of such resources, of such extensive business, a paltry sum like 40,000*l.* could be of more than momentary importance?"

"And yet you thought so yesterday," said Vernon.

"Pardon me, I did not," said his partner; "I was, in truth, much unnerved by the sudden distrust on the part of the mercantile world, of our old and respectable house; and I must confess, I was shocked to perceive that you had, within the last few days, drawn so large a sum from our immediately available assets. But that was not the sole cause of my agitation—I had other reasons."

"And pray, may I be bold enough to inquire those other reasons?" said Vernon with a sneer.

"Since you ask me, I will tell you," said Warkworth; "what is become of that large sum of money intrusted to us by Sewell, of Carlisle? You had a power of attorney to receive it from the bank, Mr. Vernon; now, sir, I think a sum of 200,000*l.* unaccounted for, is something to be anxious about."

Vernon turned suddenly very pale, and did not answer for some moments. "I had a power of attorney to receive it," he said at length, "and you must remember, that he is my friend, and not yours; I was the means of bringing him to our house."

"And the house is answerable for it," returned Warkworth, "and I have therefore a right to demand how it has been disposed of; you cannot, surely, refuse to satisfy me upon this point."

"We will talk of it to-morrow," said Vernon, suddenly rising, "I think I shall be able to satisfy you that it has been disposed of to the best advantage."

"Well, sir, I hope you may," said Warkworth distantly.

"In the meanwhile, I am glad," said Vernon, turning away, "that the unpleasantness of yesterday is not again likely to occur."

"I have taken care of that," said his partner, "the bank will assist us to any amount."

"Their good feelings toward us, you must be aware, Mr. Warkworth, is entirely owing to me."

"I admit it cheerfully," said Warkworth.

"I shall not be required, I suppose, to-day?"

"No, we can do very well without you—I shall see you to-morrow, I hope."

"Certainly, certainly;" and Vernon was about to depart, when Warkworth caught him by the hand.

"Forgive me, for what I have said," said the old man,

earnestly; "I know it would be better to have an explanation at once, and that it must be done at last; "I hope we shall go on better for the future; you know I am fully sensible of your value to the firm; I hope you believe so."

Vernon's eyes filled with tears, as he rung his partner's hand between his own; "I know it, I know it," said he, in a stifled voice; "and I hope we shall go on better than before, it shall not be my fault if we do not; forgive me for the present; I am ill, and unfit to talk about business."

"Your recent loss, I fear, has too much affected you," said Warkworth kindly.

"It may be so; good bye," and Vernon hastened into the street.

As Vernon rode towards home, certain reflections, to which he had been too long a stranger, obtruded themselves into his mind. He awoke, as it were, from a prolonged and fearful dream; and the reality that presented itself to him was no less appalling. He felt that Warkworth had too much ground for a suspicion which, if verified, might go far to destroy his character, and ruin his future prospects; but how to avert it? or rather how to dissipate it? That was a question which he could by no means resolve. As his baffled thoughts retreated from this hideous contemplation, his mind was insensibly led to the remembrance of minor, but no less degrading circumstances. How could he justify to himself the duplicity of which he had been guilty to Livingstone and his wife? and, having succeeded in his object, how should he be able to return the sum of which he had so unjustly possessed himself? Again, the bills he had contrived to get discounted by Mr. Hopwood, through the agency of Robinson—what chance was there, at present, of being able to meet them, seeing that he had now well nigh exhausted all his resources? He shuddered when he reflected upon the possibility of compromising the reputation of so worthy a creature as Robinson. But there was one comfort, the bills had three months to run; much might be done before that period; there was time to turn himself round; and he would, he was determined upon that—he would do something.

In spite, however, of these consolatory expedients, to which men, in cases of moral emergency are too prone to apply themselves, and to which Vernon was more apt than most men to resort; it may be easily imagined that



he found himself ill at ease and dissatisfied, after all, and by no means in the best temper for entering on the particular business upon which, he now suddenly recollected, Mrs. Maxwell wished to see him.

He halted once, and debated with himself, whether he should call upon her at all; but, with that waywardness which induced him upon almost every occasion, to reject his second thoughts, because they did not happen to be his first, and thinking that, all circumstances considered, he had better go through this interview at once, he stopped before the gate, and committing his horse to the care of a servant, entered the house.

He had some short time to wait before Mrs. Maxwell could be seen, and during the lapse of these few minutes, he was rather surprised to hear certain sounds of vociferous mirth, and boisterous talk, proceeding from the lower apartments. Before, however, he could even conjecture the cause of such unusual proceedings, Mrs. Maxwell made her appearance in a state of considerable disorder of dress and manner, and seizing one of Vernon's hands passionately with her own, leaned her head upon his shoulder, and began to weep bitterly.

Vernon was astonished and shocked at this exhibition of woe, but remained silent.

"Oh, my dear Horace," sobbed Mrs. Maxwell, "how unkind it was of you to stay away for so long a time; do you think I could have acted so barbarously to you? Oh! you know I could not."

"My dear creature," said Vernon, moved, "you distress me; you do indeed, by this violence of grief; for Heaven's sake, compose yourself."

"Could I have believed *you* could be so cruel, Horace!" said Mrs. Maxwell, raising her streaming eyes to those of her friend.

Vernon, like the generality of mankind, could not bear to see a woman in tears; and yet he did not exactly know what species of consolation would be, at that moment, most likely to be effectual.

"I heard of your recent calamity," continued Mrs. Maxwell, as Vernon led her to a seat, "and I deeply sympathised with you. The loss of a mother—and such a mother; "oh! it must, indeed have been an insupportable affliction to you; but, I think, had you called upon me, I might have consoled with you; I might have afford-

ed some consolation to you; I am not without feeling, Horace Vernon—I almost wish that I were.”

“Nay, say not so,” cried Vernon; “I know your heart; but let us change the subject—it is painful to me. Let me know the business you wished to see me upon.”

“I fear I can hardly mention it to you,” said Mrs. Maxwell, looking down, and with a hesitation of voice appropriate to the occasion; “I know you will say it was very imprudent of me to suffer myself to be placed in such a predicament: it is disgraceful; I feel it is. Oh, I cannot tell you, Vernon—I cannot tell you!”

“My dear Eliza,” cried Vernon, “I insist upon knowing the cause of your anxiety; how, otherwise, am I to offer you any assistance? What is the matter?”

“Then you *will* assist me?” exclaimed Mrs. Maxwell, suddenly looking up, and clasping her hands, which she held before her bosom in an attitude of supplication. “Good, kind, generous Vernon!”

“What is the matter?” repeated Vernon, with some anxiety.

“I am almost ashamed to tell you,” said the lady; and she again hesitated for a moment, and attempted a blush, which was not altogether abortive. “I have, Vernon—I have, at this moment, an execution in my house, for 2,000*l*.”

“Good God! Eliza, did not you solemnly promise me, that this should never occur again?”

“I did, certainly;” and Mrs. Maxwell again fixed her eyes upon the carpet. “I feel I have been very imprudent; but this *shall* be for the last time, I do assure you —”

At this moment the door opened, and a young lady was about to enter the room; but, perceiving a gentleman, stood irresolute, and doubtful whether she should retire.

“Leave the room, Miss Graham, instantly, I beg of you,” said Mrs. Maxwell, in a sharp voice, which accorded but ill with the dulcet tones with which she was accustomed to soothe the ear of Vernon. The young lady, with a timid look and a humble curtsy, withdrew.

“Miss Agnes—is it not?” said Vernon, turning to Mrs. Maxwell.

“It is; and you would scarcely believe the trouble I have had with that obstinate and refractory girl. But”—and Mrs. Maxwell resumed her accustomed softness of

speech;—"but, my dear Horace, pray do get me out of this scrape; do relieve me from those odious men below: but I know you will; you said you would assist me: now, my dear, good creature, set about it at once, will you?"

"Eliza," said Vernon, gravely, "I would even do this for you, although, I fear, I have gone too far already to serve you; but, I cannot—I cannot." A strange revulsion of feeling had taken place in the banker's mind, since Miss Agnes Graham entered the room.

"How, my dear Vernon—you *cannot*?" said Mrs. Maxwell, arching her eyebrows incredulously; "you are joking, sure!"

"Indeed, madam, I am not," said Vernon; and he took his hat. "I will see Robinson about it, certainly, and see whether he can serve you—I cannot."

"This is cruel of you, Vernon—indeed it is," said Mrs. Maxwell; and she burst into a passion of tears.

"I am sorry you think so," said Vernon; and he moved towards the door. "I will see you to-morrow, and let you know what Robinson says." He was already at the door, nor did Mrs. Maxwell attempt to stay him. She knew his nature too well.

"Horace, one word with you before you go," she said softly; and he turned towards her.

"I know, my dear Horace, you would serve me if you could: you have said you cannot, and I believe you. Your word was ever sufficient. But do not desert me: let me see you again—to-morrow, did you say? Oh! come to-morrow: let not such trifles as these part us—part *us*, Horace, who have once so truly loved." And a fresh supply of tears interrupted her further speech.

"God bless you, Eliza!" said Vernon, affected; "I will see you to-morrow—on my honour, I will."

Vernon returned to his own house, allaying, by his presence, the anxiety which his sisters had felt, in consequence of his keeping from home during the night; but giving occasion for more painful solicitude, by the reserve and gravity of his manner during the remainder of that day.

## CHAPTER III.

"I took him for the plainest, harmless't creature,  
That breath'd upon the earth—a Christian."

WITH the English "man of business," the eager desire of rank or exclusive distinction, appears to follow, as a matter of course, the successful pursuit of wealth. Our friend Hopwood, it must be seen, was rather a prominent specimen of this class of aspirants to aristocratic dignity: he had originally acquired a large fortune by successful trade, which he had since doubled by money transactions; for after his retirement from business, his wealth was continually and advantageously employed.

He had a valuable estate in the country, which came into his possession by the foreclosure of a mortgage; and in fact, most of his real property he had acquired by shrewd "dabbling" in money matters. He was a capitalist who could be always referred to by attorneys, money agents, *et hoc genus omne*, when "good security" could be offered; and in this manner he had amassed a property, which, when he estimated it to Lord Walgrave at 200,000*l.* exclusive of his daughter's marriage portion, he must have rather underrated than otherwise. Had Hopwood been blessed with a son, the hopes of the family would, of course, have centred in him; the army, the law, perhaps parliament, might have rendered the name illustrious; whilst, to back the growing honours of the family, he would himself have retired to a country estate, obtained a commission of the peace, been one of the quorum, have fixed himself in the county, and eventually, have earned a page in "Burke's History of the Landed Gentry."

The daughter would not have married below the rank of an "Officer in the Guards," and thus would the humble

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family of the jeweller been merged in the mass of the aristocracy.

But, not being blessed with an heir, that proud hope with a fond and wealthy father, Hopwood's chances of greatness were for a long time centred in his own exertions; his first interview with Lord Walgrave strengthened his hopes; but the visit of his lordship distinctly pointed out the road to aggrandizement:—his daughter had now become the pivot on which his eager anticipations turned.

In making the liberal offer he did to Lord Walgrave, Hopwood was not so blinded by his prospects as not to understand all the points of the contract in their true business-like bearing; indeed, he would have had no hesitation in offering Lord Walgrave even greater advantages by his marriage with his daughter; for he knew by experience, the reckless habits of expenditure amongst certain people of fashion, and he felt quite sure that he should have the management of whatever property Lord Walgrave possessed, or was ever likely to possess; so that under his guardianship it was in no danger of dilapidation. If he could, therefore, tempt his lordship by a splendid bait, he knew that he could do so securely, and more especially, Lord Walgrave being no longer what is called a young man, that, his affairs being once arranged, and he in the clear possession of a handsome income, there was every ground for expectation that he would quit his hitherto notoriously irregular mode of life, for a more prudent and respectable course.

It was with thoughts such as these, glancing rapidly over his mind, that Mr. Hopwood sought the interior of his house. He had caught the last glimpse of Lord Walgrave's cabriolet, and had heard the last and faintest sound of its wheels, as it bore its noble owner from his dwelling, before he could resolve to leave the place where he had parted with him. His feelings had undergone a sensible change in a very short period; he no longer considered himself the obscure individual he had hitherto been, and his step was firmer, and his head more erect, as he returned to his parlor. His manner, it is true, had frequently before varied; and, as his chance of distinction had been more or less favorable, he had conducted himself with more or less familiarity to his neighbors and associates. But now that he saw himself with every probability of

being allied to nobility, and that of a high rank, the first idea that crossed his mind, in his new and elevated position, was the practicability, and indeed the propriety, of cutting the whole of his former acquaintance.

"My love," he said to Georgina," with a voice and air of solemnity, as she resumed the work which the arrival of Lord Walgrave had interrupted, "you have the good fortune to possess parents who, from your earliest infancy, have devoted themselves to you—to your education, your accomplishments, and above all, to the proper inculcation of your moral and religious duties."

Here the old gentleman paused, and looked at his wife, who on her part observed a silent but most emphatic approval.

"The progress you have made in your studies, the simplicity of your character, and the total absence of art in all your proceedings, are so many proofs of the excellence of the system I have adopted for you, and will be a guide to you in after life, to bring up your own—(a severe sign from the maternal branch, warned Hopwood that he was venturing upon ticklish ground)—that is to say, my love," he stammered—"that is to say, that it may regulate your own actions, when your parents will cease to exercise control over you."

Hopwood looked inquiringly at his wife at this point, as if he thought he had escaped from the dilemma with good address. Mrs. Hopwood nodded her satisfaction: Georgina listened to the paternal harangue with great deference, wondering what could possibly be coming.

"I have said thus much, my love," continued the head of the family," because I have reason to believe, from recent circumstances, that my hopes and expectations in your favor are not likely to be disappointed—that the education and care I have bestowed on you will qualify and render you worthy the"—the—high, he would have said, but checked himself, as if he thought he was proceeding too far; but a telegraphic appeal to his wife reassured him; "Yes, I believe I may say the—high station you will occupy in society. Yes, my love," he continued, warming with the magnificence of his own ideas—"henceforth you may indulge hopes the most—the most, vast;—yes, my love, I may say—vast; and you must frame your mind and your conduct accordingly."

"But, papa, what am I to hope?" naturally inquired

Georgina, though with a timid air: "what am I to expect so vast?"

"Be patient, my love," answered Mrs. Hopwood; "you will know all in time."

"What I would particularly impress upon you, my love," continued Hopwood, "is to be careful not to form acquaintances, such as may be unpleasant to acknowledge when you are—that is—in any other situation of life."

"But, papa, I know nobody, but the few neighbors who come to see you," said Georgina, "except indeed Agnes."

"Ah! there I think you had better be cautious, my dear," remarked the old gentleman; "I do not exactly understand the proceedings of Beverly-house. Miss Graham is a nice young person; but she is left much to herself; she is liable to form improper connections; in fact, Georgina, her prospects in life are very different from yours, and I could wish that you were a little less intimate. I have my reasons for it, my love."

Mr. Hopwood again glanced at the barometer of his wife's countenance, to observe whether it rose or fell at the progress of his lecture, and was gratified at finding it "set fair."

"Your papa is perfectly right, my dear," observed Mrs. Hopwood; "he has his reason;" and here the good lady glanced significantly at her husband, and then added, with an almost imperceptible movement of her head in a certain direction, conveying to him her recollection of his confidential communication to her respecting the scene at the garden-gate, described at an earlier part of this history—"your papa has his reasons."

Georgina looked very blank at this intimation from her parents of the propriety of cutting her friend Agnes; but her observations on it, if she intended any, were interrupted by the arrival of Major Caisson.

"How d'ye do? how d'ye do?" said the good-hearted veteran, who seemed to regret that he had not three hands to give, one to each; "I can't stay a minute; I only called to ask you all to my house this evening. We have a little party. But what's the matter? any thing amiss?" for the old major observed what he thought a little reserve in the manner of the head of the family.

"No, major, no," said Mr. Hopwood; "we are much as usual. But my friend, Lord Walgrave, has just left

us; he has been consulting me on some interesting topics—I may say very interesting topics.”

“Oh, yes, I understand,” said the major, slyly, and touching his pocket significantly.

“O dear, no, major,” said Hopwood with offended dignity, “nothing of the sort, I assure you; it was on family matters we consulted—entirely on private and family matters, nothing more.”

“O, I beg your pardon; you know, of course, that his father has cut him some years since,” said the major in an indifferent tone.

“I knew no such thing,” said Hopwood, pettishly; “a trifling family disagreement, I believe, has occurred, but which will be shortly put to rights.”

“Ah, well, I don’t know much about him; neither do I wish to know,” returned the major, in the careless tone of one who does not take much interest in his subject; only take care of him, that’s all—a good-hearted sort of fellow enough, I believe—but a bit of a scamp.”

“Lord Walgrave, sir, is a nobleman of the strictest honor; and as I said, is an intimate—I may say, a *very* intimate friend of our family,” returned Mr. Hopwood, looking furiously at the ceiling, one hand being thrust into the breast of his waistcoat, and the fingers of the other beating a tattoo upon the arm of his chair.

“Oh! I beg your pardon,” said the old major, with a good-humored waggish expression lurking in his countenance; “I thought your visiting was merely a business-sort of visiting, that’s all. Whether he is a scamp or not does not matter to me, more than the one-eighth of an inch in my brass howitzer. Clarencieux, who knows these people better than I do, was talking of him the other night. I know no more of him than that.”

“It’s a pity Mr. Clarencieux can’t find something better to do than to scandalise people of quality,” said Mr. Hopwood, gravely; “it is always the case with low people—never so happy as when talking of their betters.”

“Well, are you coming to my house this evening?” asked the major, wishing to put an end to the subject.

“Why, major, I believe we must decline this evening,” replied Hopwood, sententiously; “for I have a good deal to do, I and believe the ladies will be occupied likewise.”

“Oh, very well, please yourself,” said the major,



taking up his hat ; " I should have been glad to see you. I thought it might perhaps be an amusement to this poor child here," pointing to Georgina.

" Will Agnes be with you ?" asked Georgina, interrupting her respected parent, who was about to make a remark on the major's latter observation.

" O, indeed she will, and her beau too," answered the major, who observing Georgina look most inquiringly, continued—" by the way, you don't know of that affair ?"

" She has not been here some time," said Georgina.

" She has made a conquest, that's the word, I believe, eh ?" continued the major, patting Georgina's shoulder—" and a very fine fellow he is too—a gentleman, a man of family."

Here the elder Hopwoods exchanged glances of surprise.

" Is the gentleman of this neighborhood, major ?" asked Mrs. Hopwood.

He has lately taken apartments here. I became acquainted with him through a letter of introduction he brought from an old military friend of mine ; and, finding he was a fine fellow I asked him to my house. I dare say you have seen him about ; he always walks on this road in the morning—a gentleman-like fellow, with black eyes and curling hair."

Georgina, though she said nothing, at once recognised the handsome stranger, who passed the house just before the arrival of Lord Walgrave, when her attention was excited by the " little poney." She sighed at what she thought the good fortune of her friend Agnes, in being able to visit, and amuse herself so agreeably in making conquests of handsome young men with " black eyes and curling hair."

The major seemed to divine her thoughts. " Never mind, Georgina," he said, laughing ; " it will be your turn some day to get a beau, when your father will let you go out as other people do, and not —"

" Major !" exclaimed both the alarmed parents in a singularly emphatic and deprecatory tone. The old jeweller shook his head, and contracted his features into as rigid an expression as he was able ; and his better half placed her finger upon her lips, and wore an ominous frown as the major turned suddenly to learn the cause of

their united ejaculation. Something was whispered to him about "the ears of innocence!"

"Nonsense, Hopwood" said the veteran, half out of humor with what he fancied the absurdity of Hopwood's 'system.' "Will you never get cured of this stuff? would you shut up this poor girl for ever, and never let her see anybody but such old fellows as you and I?"

"Major, I do beg—"

"Well, well, I've done—I've done," said the major, shrugging his shoulders; "everybody may gang his own way for me; good bye—good bye, Georgy—," and the honest old soldier, tapping her on the back with his cane, as an apology for shaking hands, left the family to their own cogitations.

"I declare the major is quite rude, observed Mrs. Hopwood, pursing up her features, as the veteran disappeared; "what *would* Lord Walgrave have said?"

"My dear, it is always the way with these soldiers," returned the head of the family; "they think themselves privileged to say any thing. I must say the major is very coarse. He has no discrimination. I shall discourage his visits."

"Why, my dear," interposed Mrs. Hopwood, "all the Egham people are very bad indeed; what *can* you expect from people who have never seen the world, or mixed in high society?"

"Or become acquainted with the manners of the aristocracy," observed the gentleman.

"Truly, my dear," returned the lady.

"Mamma, will you accompany me for a little walk up the road?" asked Georgina, whose countenance appeared a little suffused with a momentary flush. She had been looking through the blind, unobserved, it is true; but much more attentively than on her work, when she suddenly threw down the collar on which she had been exercising her ingenuity, and made this request. Mrs. Hopwood instantly acceded; and Georgina, with all the alacrity of youth, was ready in a trice; and having assisted her more tardy parent to equip herself, they were shortly hastening towards Englefield-green, at a pace altogether unusual with either; for when the road presented no object of immediate interest, Georgina usually loitered away in the most listless manner imaginable. Now, however, she complained of being chilly, and her good parent, though at some inconvenience, forbore to complain of her speed.

They had not walked long before they observed, at some short distance before them, a young man strolling leisurely along. He had a book in his hand, at which he sometimes looked, but was more often with his eyes upon the ground, as if the theme of his own thoughts was the more agreeable of the two. It was the same handsome stranger who passed Mr. Hopwood's house when Georgina's attention had been so suddenly drawn to the "little pony" in the front garden. He was a tall young man, of a very elegant form, and attired in that quiet unobtrusive, yet finished style peculiar to a gentleman.

As they drew nearer to him, Georgina once or twice left her mother's side to pick some little flower from the hedge-row; for though she had never before shown any marked passion for hedge-flowers, this morning she seemed particularly to fancy such a posy.

Close beside the spot where they then were, was a little excavation, intended as a small pit to catch water for, the cattle in the adjoining pasture, and into which the hedge had fallen, forming a considerable gap by the footpath. The hollow was not more than two or three yards deep; and, from the drought of the season, not more than a pail-full of muddy water remained at the bottom. The side from the road was covered with stumps of bushes, intermingled with which was grass and wild flowers growing in the soil. Mrs. Hopwood walked on, as her daughter stooped to gather more flowers, when her alarm was excited by a piercing scream; and on looking anxiously round, she beheld Georgina half way down the hollow, holding herself by the stump of a bush, and apparently in an agony of fear. Mrs. Hopwood screamed in concert, at what she considered her daughter's imminent danger; though she could render her no assistance, from fear; but the attention of the gentleman, who was but a few yards in advance, being thus powerfully excited, he quickly turned, and observing Georgina's situation, as rapidly sprung to her side, and bore her unharmed to the footpath.

Georgina's nerves appeared peculiarly susceptible; for every occasion of excitement was usually accompanied by fainting; and this was the case in the present instance. The stranger looked round, as it were mechanically, for some situation on which, for her own comfort, he could place his helpless burthen. But a dusty road affords few conveniences for such occasions; he therefore held her in

his arms, while her mother hardly knowing what she did from agitation, untied the kerchief from her neck, took off her bonnet, unloosing the combs in the action, and letting all her beautiful curls at liberty—half crying all the time, and asking what on earth she should do?"

The stranger endeavored to re-assure her; declaring that there was not the least danger—that the young lady would recover in a few seconds; in short, suggesting the consolation usual in such cases.

Meanwhile, Georgina seemed in no haste to recover. Her head rested upon the gentleman's shoulder, and she was supported by his left arm; while the truly luxuriant shining hair, loosened from its folds—the delicately tinted complexion, on which the glow of exercise and health still lingered—the rosy lips just apart—the long lashes of the closed eyes—all these formed as interesting a picture as any young gentleman of three or four and twenty might desire to look upon. To tell the truth, however, his admiration was not so manifest as might have been expected, or as that of Lord Walgrave under similar circumstances. He seemed rather to enter into the mother's feelings than to be busied with his own; and was evidently more anxious for Georgina's recovery than gratified by the contemplation of her beauty.

"How shall we ever be grateful enough to you, sir, for this kindness," exclaimed Mrs. Hopwood, alternately fanning her daughter, rubbing her hands, or applying a vinaigrette to her nose—indeed, scarcely knowing what she did. "But what on earth shall I do for my poor child?"

"Be composed, madam," said the stranger, in a kind, courteous tone; "there is not the slightest danger. Perhaps some carriage will pass presently; or, indeed, I could almost carry the young lady, if she does not live far."

This, however, was an offer rather more polite than practicable; for Georgina was not so perfectly sylph-like as to be carried a quarter of a mile without considerable personal inconvenience. But the attempt was not needed; for Mrs. Hopwood, raising her hands in an ecstasy of joy, exclaimed, as she saw a gentleman advancing, though at some distance, "Oh! I do believe that is Mr. Hopwood coming!"

The words appeared to operate as a better restorative to Georgina than the vinaigrette or the chafing, for she

immediately opened her eyes; and the first use she made of them was, most eloquently to thank her preserver.

We have before observed, that Georgina's eyes were beautiful—very beautiful; and were so expressive, that language was not needed to explain the predominant feeling of her heart. On recovering, however, she still found herself very weak, and was thankful for the gentleman's politely offered arm.

There are persons who possess the art of gaining the good opinion of all with whom they happen, for the time, to be associated. It is not in what they say; for casual introduction gives no opportunity for display of language or talent. It is in the manner—the tone of voice—the expression of countenance—which sometimes creates so favorable an impression on the mind, that it is difficult to forget. We will not say positively whether the stranger possessed these advantages; but it is certain that, by the time they reached Mr. Hopwood's dwelling, Mrs. Hopwood thought him the "most agreeable, gentlemanly young man she had ever seen;" and Georgina was satisfied that, in her acute intuitive perception of first-rate character, she was not deceived.

The stranger would have left the ladies at their door, had he not been almost implored by the elder to walk in, and allow Mr. Hopwood to thank him for the important service he had rendered their child. In vain he protested that the service was so very trifling, that he was ashamed to consider it as such. She would take no refusal; and he was ushered into the parlor, where was seated the respectable head of the family, having sundry papers and books of accounts before him, attired in an old gray morning coat, which he had slipped on for ease and economy, and wearing on his head a "Welsh wig;" having, as he fancied, taken "a little cold," by standing at the door without his hat, on the departure of his friend, Lord Walgrave.

"My dear, we have had a sad accident," said Mrs. Hopwood, who had preceded the others a few paces. "Georgina would certainly have lost her life, or been seriously injured, had it not been for the courage of this gentleman;" directing the attention of her helpmate to the stranger, who just then entered with Georgina. She then related to him the details of the accident.

The parent having first satisfied himself of the safety of

his child, was profuse in his thanks to the preserver of her life, as both the ladies insisted that he was; and, as they took their seats, Mrs. Hopwood whispered in her husband's ear, that he was the "man of family" mentioned by the major. The sentence operated upon him magically. He drew the Welsh wig from his crown with a rapid and convulsive clutch, as if the plebeian covering might possibly have escaped observation.

"If I could but have known, sir," said Hopwood, in a most apologetic tone, "that I should have been honored with a visit from a gentleman of your—your—"

"I beg, sir, that you will not inconvenience yourself," interrupted the stranger; "I shall regret having entered, if I am at all the means of incommoding you."

"By no means—by no means," returned Hopwood. "It is merely that being in such a dishabille is unusual to me; and I thought it but right to apologise —"

"I assure, you, there is no occasion —"

"The fact is, I have just parted with my intimate friend, Lord Walgrave. By the bye, perhaps you may know his lordship," suggested Hopwood.

"Not intimately," replied the other, with rather an indifferent air. "I believe I have once visited at his lordship's father's, the Earl of Lexington."

"Visited at the Earl's!" repeated Mrs. Hopwood, in an under tone of astonishment. Hopwood began to fidget about in his chair.

"Really!" ejaculated Hopwood, "do you intend to stay long in Egham? Mr. —"

"Bouverie is my name," said the visitor; "but I have not a card with me."

"Bouverie!" said Mr. Hopwood, as if revolving in his mind all the names of the aristocracy; "your name, sir, is familiar to me. Oh! now I recollect, it was gazetted this morning:" and taking up the 'Morning Herald,' then lying upon the table, he read, "'Her Majesty has been pleased to appoint Lord Frederick Bouverie to be one of the lords in waiting.'"

"He is my uncle," said Mr. Bouverie, smiling.

"His uncle a lord in waiting!" muttered Hopwood to himself, nervously crumpling the paper in his hand. "Excuse me one instant," and he darted out of the room, without saying another word.

"I am very much afraid I inconvenience Mr. Hop-

wood," remarked Mr. Bouverie; "my visit is at an unfortunate moment, I fear."

"Mr. Hopwood will consider your visits most flattering at any moment," replied Mrs. Hopwood; and here she would again have expressed her gratitude to the preserver of her child, as she persisted in calling Mr. Bouverie; had he not absolutely forbade it. The head of the establishment re-appeared in half a minute; during which short interval he had changed his grey coat and silk neckerchief for his usual respectable attire.

"Why, Mr. Hopwood, you surely have not thought it necessary to make such a stranger of me as to change your dress," said Mr. Bouverie.

"No, indeed; but I feel more comfortable now," said Hopwood. "I don't know how I came to have such things on; but I hope, Mr. Bouverie, that we shall have the pleasure of seeing you often. Do you intend to reside at Egham?"

"O dear, no; I merely wish to breathe a little fresh air and quiet for a short time. The neighborhood is pretty enough, and the vicinity to town is convenient."

"Particularly if you have any occupation," remarked Hopwood, hoping, possibly, by that leading question, that he just would be a little communicative respecting himself.

Mr. Bouverie, however took no notice of the remark; but turning toward Georgina, observed, "And this young lady, I presume, sir, is your only daughter?"

"Our only child, sir," replied Hopwood; "and I don't know how sufficiently to thank you on her behalf. It's a very ugly place that, I have often thought of speaking to the overseer of the road about it. It is by no means pleasant to think we have so dangerous a place in our vicinity."

"At all events," said Mr. Bouverie to Georgina, "from the fright you have experienced this morning, it will afford you no very pleasant reminiscence."

"I am not at all sure of that," returned Georgina, "If one is foolish enough to get into danger, it is no slight satisfaction to be rescued so gallantly. I am sure I shall have no occasion to think otherwise than pleasantly of the spot." And as she spoke, her cheeks mantled with color. Mr. Bouverie looked at her as if he hardly knew

whether to take the compliment in its fullest sense, or as a mere girlish expression of feeling.

"She is a complete child of nature, sir," said the proud father; "aided, I trust, by the best education and example—innocence itself!" he added in a whisper.

Mr. Bouverie bowed politely an assent to the observation, and rose to take his leave.

"You leave us soon, Mr. Bouverie," said Hopwood.

"I thank you, I am obliged to go, as I expect a relation of mine from town on particular business, Colonel Clifford."

"Ha! Colonel Clifford," repeated Hopwood, as if he had mentioned the name of an old acquaintance.

"What, you know Clifford, eh?" said Bouverie, "he is one of the Duchess of Gloucester's equerries."

"Oh, no; not exactly, I have heard his name often. But, now you are here, pray name a day when you will do me the honor to dine with me; say to-morrow at six o'clock—only ourselves—quite plain—make no stranger of you—you dislike ceremony, I know."

"With all my heart," said Mr. Bouverie; "I shall have great pleasure: you are quite right in saying I dislike ceremony; I assure you there is nothing I dislike so much. Good morning;" and bowing to the ladies, Mr. Bouverie withdrew.

"Quite the gentleman, I declare," observed Mrs. Hopwood, directly the door closed upon him.

"A first rate person, depend on it," said Hopwood, emphatically; "I know the manners of these people well; nevertheless, there is a little bit of mystery about him."

"But, my dear, he has an uncle, a lord in waiting," suggested Mrs. Hopwood.

"And a relation an equerry," observed Mr. Hopwood.

"And he visits at the earl's," continued Mrs. Hopwood.

"And he saved my life, mamma," said Georgina.

"True, my love; and he is one of the genteel men I ever *did* see," said Mrs. Hopwood, "except, indeed, Lord Walgrave."

"The acquaintance of this young man, too, may prove useful," observed Hopwood, musing; "if Lord Walgrave should not—hum—why then this—hum—you understand my love," he added in an under tone, to his wife.

"Perfectly, my dear," returned Mrs. Hopwood, in the same sort of confidential whisper; "besides, you know



my love," she added, with true feminine tact, "men, however unexceptionable, should not have it all their own way; they become careless, when they are secure."

"True, my dear, *very* true," said Hopwood, "yes; we will cultivate the friendship of this young man. I wish, however, he had been more communicative about himself; you see he eluded my question."

"You had better invite the major, my dear;—let me see, a nice bit of salmon—a turkey poult."

"What his object can be down here, completely puzzles me. I have it," cried Hopwood, touching his forehead with the tip of his finger, as if he had made a notable discovery: "I will just step to Sniggles, he knows every thing, and every body's business. It is true I have passed him once or twice, lately; but a dinner will set all to rights; he will draw him out, and unravel the mystery."

"Do you know, my dear," suggested Mrs. Hopwood, interrupting the current of her husband's thoughts.—"I should not be at all surprised if he is waiting for some appointment."

"Ah! a government appointment," repeated her spouse. "A secret mission:—egad, my love, you've hit it; depend on it he is waiting *incog.* for orders; depend on it, a diplomatist. No doubt of it," said Hopwood, striking the table energetically, by way of a clincher; "else why this mystery—this privacy—a man of family—of such connections—you are right, my love:—I will go and invite Sniggles for to-morrow, and give him the cue to draw him out:—we must know more about this young man."

In a small place like Egham, every bit of gossip spreads like wild-fire, and with an abundance of embellishment. No sooner had Hopwood communicated his suspicions of Mr. Bouverie's real calling and rank to Mr. Sniggles, and invited him to dinner, to meet the supposed dignitary, than the gossip proceeded from one acquaintance to another, enlarging at every recital, so that by the evening, it was confidently understood by the major's visitors, that Mr. Bouverie was a nobleman *incog.*; the intimate friend of Lord Melbourne, and about to proceed on a secret and confidential mission to the Emperor of Russia.

The Hopwood family had retired early to rest, according to their custom; but Georgina, instead of going to bed, had seated herself at the window, thinking over the

events of the day. She was not particularly pleased with the result. Her father's manœuvres respecting Lord Walgrave were not lost upon her. She easily divined his plans, and firmly resolved to have her own way, whenever it might suit his convenience to consult her inclination.

Mere worldly consideration seldom enters into the calculations of a girl of seventeen in her views of future life; and the truth is, that Georgina thought more of the young and handsome Mr. Bouverie, whether he were aristocratic or humble, than of Lord Walgrave, though he might trace his ancestry to the Cæsars.

Georgina had a keen perception of the ridiculous, and had a sly, satirical way of amusing herself at the expense of others. Nothing delighted her so much as the opportunity of indulging her vanity and love of mischief together. She would, in fact, have been a finished coquette, but that this unamiable characteristic was fortunately somewhat counteracted by a heart formed for better things. She respected worth, and had formed to herself a standard of high character; ideal, certainly, from her inexperience of the world, but one to which she could look up with admiration. Those on whom she would play off her *espigleries*, would generally, therefore, be legitimate subjects for ridicule.

Vanity first prompted her conquest of the cadet, and her love of mischief the continuation of the adventure. Her conduct on that occasion was in a great degree the result of thoughtlessness; but, indeed, when vanity is piqued, women show but little consideration for each other; it is a perfectly natural jealousy in the sex, and must not be placed to Georgina's disparagement. Lord Walgrave, she knew, was a mere man of fashion; and therefore the little spice of coquetry by which she fixed the admiration of his lordship, was quite excusable. But, with regard to Mr. Bouverie, she was actuated by feelings altogether different. She had beheld him at first only as a casual passer-by, and was then struck by his superior air and truly handsome appearance—an admiration which is not singular, considering the retired life she was obliged to lead. But when she heard from the major that he was a "fine fellow," and a "man of family;" and when, from her father's refusal to go to the party, no chance existed of meeting him, she at once adopted the bold plan of

affording him an opportunity of introducing himself, and to judge for herself whether he was really the superior person his exterior indicated. She was rather mortified, however, to think he had taken so little notice of her. He had scarcely once directed his regards towards her. How different from the fervent admiration of the cadet, and the impressive though polite attentions of Lord Walgrave. Yet the tone of his voice, though not addressed to her, was still in her ear; the expression of his dark eyes, though not for her, was still in her heart; the others were already forgotten.

Georgina was pondering on these things, when looking towards the road, she saw two figures walking slowly along the foot-path on the opposite side. She looked earnestly; she could not be deceived; yes, it was Mr. Bouverie, and, on his arm, was Agnes Graham! He was evidently escorting her home from the major's party. It was a clear, beautiful night, and she could see distinctly. He was bending towards her; and in his right hand he clasped hers, which was resting upon his arm.

The sight fell upon Georgina's heart like an ice-bolt! The truth of Mr. Bouverie's indifference flashed before her—he loved Agnes! Her mind had been so completely occupied with him from the first moment she saw him, that the words of the major had been entirely forgotten. Agnes had never once entered her thoughts; and now she was rudely awakened to the fact that she had given way to an indiscreet feeling of admiration, which had even become painful, and for one who seemed entirely engrossed with another. Poor Georgina threw herself upon the bed, and relieved the fulness of her heart by a flood of tears.

## CHAPTER IV.

"Hope is a lover's staff; walk hence with that,  
And manage it against despairing thoughts."

GEORGINA was not mistaken in the identity of the person she had seen from her chamber-window. It was, as she supposed, that Mr. Bouverie was escorting her friend Agnes home from the major's party. She was perfectly right in her conjecture that Mr. Bouverie had, during the time of their interview that morning, looked upon her with indifference; for during the time of his intimacy with the major, he had many opportunities of meeting Agnes, and had really become much interested in her truly unaffected amiability of disposition, and ingenuous character. He had sought every means which these frequent advantages afforded him, to make himself acquainted with her true feeling and sentiment—for she was then almost a constant visitor at the major's house; and the result was, that in his opinion Agnes was the most single-hearted, the most charming girl, he had ever met with. This feeling, strengthened as it was by a period of intimacy and fast increasing into a strong attachment, was not likely to be set aside by an accidental introduction to Georgina, even possessing, as she did, some trifling superiority in personal beauty.

During this state of, as it may be termed, their preliminary acquaintance, Mr. Bouverie had not sought any intelligence of Agnes' family;—he thought only of herself, and never doubted for an instant but that her connections were as undeniable as he could wish them to be.

Agnes was less gay than usual on her walk homeward. She had heard the speculation regarding the rank of Mr. Bouverie amongst the gossips at the major's, in which the opinions of his exalted position were freely hazarded. It

was then that Agnes began to be seriously aware of the state of her own feelings with regard to him, and to reflect on the hopelessness of indulging them. And when she thought of her own insignificance—of her home—her mother—contrasted with the brilliant career which, by common report, awaited Mr. Bouverie, the tears started to her eyes at the conviction of the improbability of realising those dreams to which his earnest attentions had given rise.

Mr. Bouverie had likewise communicated to her the adventure of the morning, which had sadly discomposed her; for since the major's last party, when Georgina was present, Agnes thought she had discovered a shade in her friend's character which she had never before observed; and she absolutely dreaded Georgina's attractions, and her mode of giving them effect, which she had fearfully exaggerated in her own mind, from the talismanic effect she remembered them to have produced upon the cadet. The easy transfer Georgina had made on that occasion of the student's heart, had quite astonished Agnes at the time, but had produced no other effect than a momentary mortification of that vanity which is inseparable from human nature. She had no real regard for the individual, consequently the easy withdrawing former attentions did not in the least affect her. But with Mr. Bouverie she felt, that if Georgina should succeed in estranging his regard, it would destroy her peace for ever.

The indulgences of these feelings made Agnes sorrowful as she walked home, accompanied by Mr. Bouverie. She felt a certain vague presentiment that she was about to lose him; and although her own good sense showed her the weakness of indulging in serious hopes of a happy sequel to their present intimacy, she could not but wish, if it must be severed, that the blow might be dealt by some other hand than that of her old schoolfellow and friend.

"But why are you so sad this evening, Agnes?" inquired her companion, who had in vain endeavored to rally her from her evident dejection; "tell me what has happened?" he added, kindly.

"I'm sure I could hardly give you any reason for it," replied Agnes; and then after a pause she added—"But do you really intend to dine at Mr. Hopwood's to-morrow?"

"Most certainly, I cannot do otherwise," said Mr. Bouverie; "they pressed me to come with so much kindness, it would have positively been uncivil to refuse."

"And you thought Georgina very sretty?"

"There can hardly be two opinions about it: she is very handsome."

"O pray let go my hand, I am very warm," said Agnes.

Mr. Bouverie looked at her with a little surprise, but made no remark. He did not see the flush upon her cheek as he spoke of Georgina, nor if he had, would he have imagined the cause.

"But I think you told me you were very intimate with this family, yourself, Agnes?"

"Yes; Georgina and I were schoolfellows, and I used to call upon her every day; but I thought I perceived some little coolness, and I have not been there so much lately."

"It must be fancy, surely; what reason could they have had for coolness with you?" said Mr. Bouverie. "Shall I say anything?" he added.

"No, no, I will call myself," quickly returned Agnes; "I dare say it is mere supposition; I should not like the subject to be mentioned, if it should prove a mere whim of mine."

"It shall be as you please," said Mr. Bouverie; "but come, cheer up, Agnes; I never saw you in such bad spirits—you are generally the gayest of the gay."

Agnes could only answer by a deep sigh.

"My dear Agnes," he continued, "you have evidently something upon your mind which distresses you. Tell me what it is—treat me as a friend—a friend who takes an interest, a deep interest, in everything that concerns you."

"I fear I have been very imprudent," sighed Agnes.

"In what way; pray explain, Agnes?"

"I mean with regard to yourself," returned Agnes, her natural candor struggling against her natural reserve; "you will soon be called to fulfil your important duties; you will leave this place, perhaps for ever, and forget me."

If he could have seen her eyes at that moment, he would have seen them filled with tears.

"Important duties! leave this place!" repeated the young man with astonishment, "my dear girl, I don't know what you mean. But as to forgetting you, Agnes!

If I have not explained in set phrase the sentiments I

entertain for you, it is because I believe such feelings have a language of their own; but, be assured, charming Agnes, the interest you excited in me on my first seeing you, has increased to a deep and fervent regard, which I feel will never cease but with existence;" and, as he uttered the last words in a tender and assuring tone, he repossessed himself of the hand she had so pettishly withdrawn at the mention of Georgina's beauty. "But tell me," he added in a gayer tone; "tell me what you mean by my being 'called to fulfil important duties;' I know of none, I assure you, of more importance, nor half so much interest to me as the present."

"I have often heard," said Agnes, "that gentlemen, who are educated as diplomatists, insensibly acquire the habit of concealment even from those with whom they are most intimate; in other words, of clothing their thoughts in diplomatic language."

"You are rather severe on these gentlemen, Agnes," said the young man, laughing; "but what has that to do with my 'important duties?'"

"To tell you the truth," said Agnes, hesitatingly—"for I cannot be diplomatic myself—I have been told your real situation in life."

"Well!"

"And I cannot but be sensible, notwithstanding your kind expressions to me, that your brilliant career will place you at such a distance from me—in short, though I cannot doubt for a moment your sincerity—yet I am afraid you deceive yourself. Though I am very young, I have been so accustomed to disappointment and mortification, that I almost fear to hope."

"My pretty Agnes, you speak like a little philosopher, or sage of seventeen," said Mr. Bouverie, gaily; "but pray where did you obtain intelligence of my 'brilliant career?'"

"O, at the major's, this evening," replied Agnes; "it is all discovered."

"Hum! that's a pity;" said the young man, with mock gravity.

"Yes, I was afraid it would vex you," said Agnes.

"Well, since it is so, it is important that I should know all that has been said. Let me know the extent of their discoveries," said the man of mystery.

"Well, they seem to be aware that you are a nobleman of distinguished rank!"

"Ah!"

"That you are an intimate friend—I believe relation—of the prime minister!"

"Ah!"

"And that you are to be our Russian ambassador!"

"What?" exclaimed the young man, putting his handkerchief to his face.

"Our ambassador to the court of Russia!"

"Ambassador to the court of Russia!" Here Mr. Bouverie made a full stop, and broke into such a fit of laughter as to astonish Agnes, who could perceive nothing laughable in the enumeration of his dignities.

"This is too good," he said, as his mirth somewhat subsided, "and in the name of heaven! who, my dear girl, has been imposing on your simplicity?"

"O, I heard it from Mr. Sniggles, and Mr. Hopwood has positively said so."

"And the major?" inquired Mr. Bouverie.

"O, he laughed, and said nothing; but I think he believes it too."

"Then I can assure you," if that is any satisfaction to you," returned the supposed ambassador, "that there is not one particle of truth in the whole story, and where they picked up such nonsense, I can't imagine."

"What, then, you are *not* a nobleman of high rank?"

"No more than you are a duchess."

"Nor a relation of the minister?"

"I never spoke to him in my life."

"Nor the ambass—," but she could not finish the sentence; for his smothered merriment, and the conviction that struck her of the absurdity of the rumor, produced such a reaction of feeling, that they both laughed most heartily together.

"Well, I am *so* glad," said Agnes, with her wonted gaiety of tone; "the belief that you were such a personage *did* make me very melancholy."

"How such a report could be circulated seems astounding," said Mr. Bouverie.

"I think it arose from Mr. Hopwood and Mr. Sniggles," replied Agnes.

"Ah, then, that accounts for the extreme attention I met with from Mr. Hopwood; I shall expect no little amuse-



ment from him to-morrow," observed the young man, smiling at some conceit which crossed his mind; "and to-morrow evening I will tell you all about it, Agnes; for I shall leave early. Shall you be at the major's?"

"No, I believe not," replied Agnes; "for I think they have determined to set off to-morrow to the north of England to visit a relation of the major's. It has been delayed a long time; but they have at last resolved —"

"The major said something of it; but I did not understand they were going so soon," said Mr. Bouverie. "I must, however, seek an introduction to your mother, Agnes."

"She is gone to town for a few days," said Agnes; "but if you leave Mr. Hopwood's early, you can call at our house: there can be no impropriety in it—at least, I should think not—can there?"

"Clearly not. Indeed, if your mother were at home, I would introduce myself," said Mr. Bouverie. "I stand well enough in the world to do that, although I am not an ambassador. Indeed, after what you have heard, it would be but right to tell you more of myself, and in what my 'brilliant' prospects consist."

"Do come then; and come early," said Agnes earnestly.

They had by this time arrived at the gate of Beverley-house.

"I have likewise something to say to you," she added.

"Be assured I will come.—God bless you!"

"Farewell!" and she entered the gate, as he turned to retrace his steps to Egham.

## CHAPTER V.

“ ‘Arcades ambo,’ *id est*, blackguards both.”

BESIDE a cheerful fire, at Mr. Robinson's office in Jermy-street, were seated the friends, Jeffries and Hunsman, pleasantly occupied in social discourse.

Mr. John Jeffries, after experiencing the vicissitudes of the world in his pursuit of wealth and distinction, had been glad to make overtures to his former master, who, with that philanthropy which formed so conspicuous a trait in his character, being better aware than most of his professional excellencies, charitably forgave him his former errors, and hailed his return to the honest duties of his calling. The confidential clerk was therefore much in the same position as the reader found him at the commencement of the first volume; having been a gainer of nothing excepting additional experience, which years and intercourse with the world seldom fail to teach. Mr. Robinson's conduct towards him was, however, marked by a slight degree of reserve, which the acute Jeffries could not but be sensible of, and which was not a little mortifying to his feelings.

“I'm thinking,” slowly remarked Hunsman after a pause, and having adjusted, with particular minuteness, some fragments of stray seacoal upon the blazing mass, as if to allow his thoughts full time to resolve themselves into intelligibility;—“I'm thinking, I say, Jack,”—

“So you said before,” interposed his friend with vivacity.

—“That we are a precious set of rogues, Jack!”

The interjectional “Umph” of Mr. Jeffries, at this startling conclusion of his friend's reflections, might be likened to a note of admiration at the end of a sentence: it expressed nothing very distinctly. It was difficult to

say whether Mr. Jeffries was astonished or pleased at his companion's pleasantry.

"Not that I'm remarkably melancholy about *that*, mind ye," resumed Hunsman quickly, lest his friend might perhaps mistake his sentiment;—"but I don't see, in all this blessed time, that we are a copper the better for it. I haven't a *mag* myself, and I don't believe, Jack, that you could give me change for it, if I had."

Jeffries drew a long breath, as if he contemplated a serious attack upon a pot of ale: it was probably intended as a sigh in confirmation of Hunsman's last speculation.

"There was my hundred pounds—but lord! it vanished afore I knew what I was well about. I thought of doing summut in the coal and tatur line. And then you must set up for a gentleman;—and no blame to you, mind ye—only you see how long that lasted."

"My misfortunes were the result of circumstances, Mr. Hunsman—circumstances entirely beyond my control," said Jeffries with a tinge of reserve; for the subject was far from pleasant to him. At this apology, made by Jeffries for his ill success, Hunsman indulged in a peculiar chuckle.

"When I was over the way, yonder," said he, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder, intending to convey a notion of the locality where he once officiated as turnkey,—"I never remember to have seen a swell as had swindled his creditors, or as was unfortunate—that's what they call it, I believe—as didn't say it was the result of circumstances—'circumstances out of their control'—them are the very words. It wasn't their fault—O no; in course not;—they could't help it, poor lambs!—it was '*circumstances*.'" And here the worthy speaker stretched his palms upon his knees, and bending forward, indulged in constrained, yet not the less hearty merriment.

"Jabez, you are a fool!" said Jeffries, not however, with any asperity of tone; for he knew, by experience, it was useless to be offended with his friend's pleasant turn of mind. "I don't mean in all things,—but—"

"No; if you did, I'm bless'd if I don't know the greatest fool of the two!"—and Hunsman's pleasantry again manifested itself in half-audible cackinnations.

"You sometimes talk of things you don't understand, Jabez," continued the clerk, urbanely:—"and then—but, however, I have intended sometime past, to talk to you

about our prospects—for it must be confessed, they are not over and above bright—and see if we can't mend them a bit."

"Now you speak like a trump, Jack!" exclaimed his companion, clapping him on the shoulder with a vigor which more accorded with his own than the feelings of his friend, whom he nearly unseated. "I am willing to allow you all the *nous* you've got—a precious sight more than I have, Jack—I know that—and I know, if you think over the matter something may be done to better us. I see pretty clearly, that we're standing on our last legs up at 'the house,' and even them are giving way very fast. The only one that's done any good among us, is your governor, Jack."

"Not so much as you think," returned the other. "He is too fond of *this*, do much good:"—and the confidential clerk significantly shook his elbow, by way of hinting his master's failing. "He has picked up a nice lot of tin in his time; but I know he hasn't got much of it now."

"Well, I thought he had been more awake than that," said Hunsman.

"The best of us have our failings," replied Jeffries, placidly; "and that's his. Bating that, there's only two that's a match for him—myself, and *one more*."

Hunsman looked at his companion as if he perfectly comprehended the implied, though mysterious association.

"I b'lieve you," said he, with emphasis. "But, Jack, what do you think of my misses's new rig for raising the wind?"

"It's a bad speck, Jabez," said Jeffries, decidedly:—"she has no more interest now than I have; and if she catches a few flats, and takes their money, when they find they have no government places, they may get savage, and then there will be a blow-up."

"Very true," said Hunsman thoughtfully: "do you know the cove as they expect here to-day?"

"Don't I?" said Jeffries, as if any doubt of his intelligence conveyed a reproach. "He is a friend of Laurence's—he that's going to marry Vernon's sister. Laurence brought him here one day about some business; and when my governor knew how his affairs stood, he hatched up this little bit of plunder."

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"How much is he to come down with?" asked Hunsman.

"Six hundred down, before he receives his appointment."

"Then I wish he may get it," added Hunsman, who with infinite humor slowly raised his forefinger, and placed it beside his nose, thereby causing the unusually thoughtful visage of Jeffries to relax into a smile. "Well now," he continued, "the 'old un,' though talkative enough about matters sometimes, never so much as hinted a word of this to me."

"No more did my governor to me," said Jeffries.

"The devil!" ejaculated Hunsman.

"Why, there's more ways of knowing things than being told: you know that, Jabez. I wouldn't live with my man," continued Jeffries, in the pride of superior intellect, "if I couldn' know his affairs just as well as my own."

"Well, but I thought your governor had made all safe there, since," said Hunsman inquiringly, and pointing towards the baize door.

"The governor's a very clever fellow, Jabez," answered Jeffries; "but, you know, stone walls have ears, and so have doors, though they may be plated with iron."

"Why, you haven't?" said Hunsman, opening his eyes at Jeffries, as if he had seen him for the first time.

"Haven't I though!" and the two friends looked at each other for a few seconds, and broke into a simultaneous laugh.

Jeffries arose, and having bolted the office door, beckoned his friend towards the scene of a former *espionage* which the reader will doubtless remember at the commencement of the first volume. He then opened the inner door, and displayed that which closed Mr. Robinson's private office, of which he invariably kept the key himself, and which, since Mr. Jeffries's explanation with him one morning, he had carefully covered with iron sheeting, concealed, however, for the sake of appearance, with green cloth, ornamented with brass-headed nails.

"Now, Jabez, my boy," said his friend, triumphantly, "look narrowly over that door, and tell me what you can see suspicious." Jabez looked warily, but not a scratch in the cloth was discernible. Jeffries then, with the assistance of his nail and the point of a pen-knife, gently

raised one of the brass heads which, instead of a nail, covered a wooden peg, and exactly fitted a considerable orifice, punched into the iron plate and through the door, though without perforating the cloth on the other side. For all the purposes of hearing, therefore, when Jeffries was between the doors, it served him completely. The confidential clerk having replaced the peg, looked round at his friend.

Hunsman stood for a few moments as if in mental contemplation of the mystery he had just witnessed, and then, as if all comment or inquiry must be superfluous, he slapped his open hand energetically upon his thigh, and ejaculated, "Well, I'm d—d!" The friends then resumed their seats by the fire.

"Now, Jabez," said Jeffries, in a sort of patronising tone, which his recent triumph of ingenuity entitled him to assume, "my boy, we are old friends, and I have put you up to this rig because I know it's safe with you."

"I'm blest if ever I split on you, Jack," was the instant reply of the incorruptible Hunsman; "but you know *that*."

"Why, it isn't the interest of either of us to split, Jabez," said Jeffries; "because, if we do anything, it must be together. "Now, I want to practise in the court again, Jabez; for, between you and I, the governor doesn't trust me quite as he ought; I shall do better if I get the chance again."

"Avast there!" interposed Hunsman; "I hear somebody on the stairs."

Jeffries instantly placed himself at his desk, with his nose upon the parchment, and Hunsman seized his hat and put back the chair, which double movement was scarcely accomplished before the door opened, and Mr. Robinson, entered, accompanied by Mrs. Maxwell.

"Have you been here long, Hunsman?" inquired the lady.

"Only this blessed minute stepped in, ma'am; one minute more, and I should have been arter you," was the ready reply of the ex-functionary.

"Has any person been this morning, Mr. Jeffries?" asked Mr. Robinson, blandly.

"Nobody at all particular, sir," answered Mr. Jeffries; "except, indeed, Griggs."

"Ah! and what does that poor man propose?" inquired the solicitor, with an appearance of feeling.

"He says, sir, he cannot take up Smith's returned acceptance of 20*l.*; and if you arrest him, he must go to Whitecross-street, and his children to the workhouse."

"Dear me! dear me!" said the solicitor, shrugging his shoulders, as if the subject was painful: "the effects of improvidence! These are the great drawbacks on our profession, Mrs. Maxwell—our feelings constantly at war with our duty. Mr. Jeffries, tell the officer to treat the poor gentleman with respect. Children to the workhouse—wife died last week—ugh! well, well!" and with these expressions of feeling, the humane solicitor opened the door of his office with his branch key, and left the two friends again to themselves. Many facetious signs passed between them on the exit of the lady and gentleman, evidently in comic allusion to the solicitor's touching remarks.

"Your misses wont go back before eight or nine o'clock to night," whispered Jeffries to Hunsman; "so that you can come to me at the Three Crowns. I shall have something to say to you; something that's been running in my mind. I think we can do something together—d'ye understand?"

Hunsman nodded to his friend, as if the invitation and the object of it were perfectly comprehended by him, and promised his attendance.

A smart rap at the door announced the expected visitor, which proved to be no other than Mr. Bouverie. He was speedily ushered into the adjoining office by the obsequious Jeffries, and received with many bows by the solicitor, and with dignified politeness by Mrs. Maxwell.

"Now, Jeff.," said the impatient Hunsman.

"Hold your tongue!" returned the other, in a low tone, but with an authoritative manner; "if he was only to catch a word, we're done; he is as wary as an old fox since *that* time. Stop: I had better play off a little game upon him." With that, Mr. Jeffries boldly knocked at his master's door. The solicitor immediately appeared.

"As you are likely, perhaps, to be some time engaged, sir," said the confidential clerk, "would you be kind enough to spare me for half an hour? Mr. Hunsman says he will attend to the door."

"Why, Mr. Jeffries," replied his master, hesitating,

"don't you think it would be advisable to wait a very short time? I shall not be long with this gentleman, and the rest of the day is your own."

"Oh, certainly, sir," returned Jeffries; "I beg pardon for interrupting you; I only thought, perhaps, I might have been back before you had finished. 'I'll wait, sir, of course.'" As the solicitor retired, Hunsman gently shook his head. Admiration of his friend's genius overpowered every other feeling.

"You was right, Jack, when you said only *two* of you were a match for the governor," said Hunsman, thoughtfully; "but, I'm thinking, it would be hard to find *one* match for you." Jeffries took the compliment as it was intended, and, without further waste of words, motioned Hunsman to be on the alert, and gently sliding between the doors, prepared to take an immediate interest in what was proceeding within.

"Of course, sir, I need not apologise for this apparent informality in your introduction to this lady." Jeffries had no difficulty in recognising the bland tones of the solicitor. "It is rather a delicate business, sir, for a professional man to interfere in; but the high respect I have for your friend Captain Laurence, and the anxiety you manifest that your object should be accomplished without the interference of your friends, has induced me to interest this lady in your behalf."

"Sir, I feel much indebted to you," interposed Mr. Bouverie.

"Sir, I feel always most anxious to be of any service to my friends, and such I may venture, I believe, to call Captain Laurence; the intimate connection, I might almost say relative, of my respected client and friend, Mr. Vernon," continued Mr. Robinson. "But, as I said, this lady, who I have had the happiness to be acquainted with for some time, has it in her power to forward your views. I believe, my dear madam, I may be quite explicit with this gentleman; for as this business has been sufficiently understood, it only remains to close the terms."

"O, by all means," returned Mrs. Maxwell; "it is what I wish."

"Then, sir, this lady, who by the way has particular reasons for being *incognito*, consents to procure you the appointment of a district paymastership within six weeks, if you can oblige her with the loan of six hundred pounds.



I say loan, because she is not accustomed to any traffic of this kind, therefore she will only consent to receive the money as a loan for twelve months."

"You have stated my ideas precisely as I could have wished, Mr. Robinson," said the lady; "I could not accept the money on any other terms."

"Madam, I am sure I have every reason to be obliged by your liberality," said Mr. Bouverie, "and you need not fear on my part any desire to pry into your secrecy; I can only say I shall be most happy to furnish you with the sum you require, by the hands of our worthy friend, Mr. Robinson."

The solicitor bowed very low.

"Permit me," added Mr. Bouverie, "to hand you a purse containing one hundred sovereigns; the remainder of the sum I will pay into Mr. Robinson's hands to-morrow."

Mr. Robinson took the purse, and reaching his cash-box, placed it therein; and taking thence a bank note for 50*l.*, doubled it, and presented it with a low obeisance to Mrs. Maxwell. The amount of the note was of course unobserved by Mr. Bouverie.

"I am happy to be the humble means of service to those whom I respect," said Mr. Robinson; "permit me, therefore, madam, to hand you this 100*l.* bank of England note; it will be more portable for you than gold. We of the profession have a sad character, sir," said he, turning to Mr. Bouverie, "for retaining some portion of whatever passes through our hands; but I am always contented with the profits of my profession. When I can have the happiness, as in this instance, to act solely as a friend—disinterestedly—it is my greatest enjoyment."

"You are always so *very* kind, Mr. Robinson," said Mrs. Maxwell, raising her handkerchief to her face in rather an equivocal manner; and having observed the amount of the note, placed it in her purse.

"Sir, I must say it is rare to meet with that liberality in the profession which you have the reputation to possess," said Mr. Bouverie.

"Indeed, sir, I fear I ill-deserve the kind opinions of my friends," replied the solicitor, with much humility, but with more truth than he was in the general habit of affording gratuitously; "and when did you say that I might expect the pleasure of seeing you again, sir?"

"O, to-morrow in all probability. I dine a short distance in the country to-day; but to-morrow I shall be in town, and will take the opportunity of calling to complete our arrangement."

Jeffries noiselessly emerged from his concealment, and regained his companion's side.

"By jingo! Jabez, if I had that man's abilities I would be Lord Mayor before the year was out," said the clerk in a whisper to his confederate; "he smooths them over so nicely—makes 'em all believe he is doing 'em such a favor."

"And so he is, if they did but know it—a particular favor—taking a world of temptation out of their way," added Jabez, grinning.

"Hush!" and Jeffries seated himself at his desk as the door of the solicitor's office opened, and Mr. Bouverie took his leave of the solicitor, who accompanied him to the outer door.

"Mr. Jeffries, I trust I have not detained you long," said Mr. Robinson; "but your time is now your own. I shall accompany Mrs. Maxwell, who has some further business on hand. I shall not return again to-day."

Jeffries bowed his thanks.

"Hunsman, you can bring the carriage for me at eight o'clock," said Mrs. Maxwell, as she left the office with the solicitor.

"I'll be there, ma'am," replied Hunsman, as he closed the door after them; "and now, Jeff, I'll cut, and be with you at the Three Crowns by five o'clock. I must just see how my old woman gets on." So saying, the excellent Hunsman left his accomplished friend, "Jeff," to enjoy the advantage of his solitary cogitations on the scene he had just witnessed,

## CHAPTER VI.

"Hast thou then lived in courts?"

"I am no courtier—no fawning dog of state,  
To lick and kiss the hand that buffets me."

Mr. and Mrs. Hopwood having talked themselves into a full assurance of the 'distinguished' though 'concealed' rank of their new acquaintance, Mr. Bouverie, looked forward with great interest and curiosity to the result of the table stratagem for 'drawing him out,' and thereby assuring themselves of the propriety of cultivating his intimacy.

The sagacious Hopwood had fully calculated upon the stimulus the knowledge of so handsome a young man visiting at the house would impart to Lord Walgrave; for he began to be nervously anxious that the proposal of his lordship should have a settled and decided character. There was a chance, likewise, that this young man might be as good a *parte* as the noble Viscount himself; or, at all events supposing that the brilliant hopes of the Hopwood family were destined to be deferred, Mr. Bouverie's intimacy with the ministry could at any time procure him, Hopwood, a commission of the peace; and an active county magistrate, in stirring times, might make himself sufficiently conspicuous to merit the gratitude of the reigning powers.

Mrs. Hopwood had devoted the best of her ability to make up a "nice little dinner;" and the head of the establishment had been revolving in his mind the party he should invite; but at last he determined to have it "snug." The major, unfortunately, was going that day with his lady to town, to proceed to the north of England; and

the only individual he could ask, excepting the gossip, Mr. Sniggles, who was to act the principal part on the occasion, was old Mr. Grayling, one of the King's Head parlor customers, who had at least the reputation of being a rich man, and one so fond of the bottle, that his conversation would not interfere with their projected attack upon Mr. Bouverie's confidence. He would therefore occupy the vacant seat at table, and make up the select party of six.

Mr. Hopwood's usual hour of dining was five, excepting at the times of his absence from home on business in London—then the family dined earlier; but on this occasion the repast was deferred till six. Mr. Sniggles had arrived some time, and had passed the interval in confidential discourse with his friend Hopwood. At a quarter to six Mr. Grayling entered, and seated himself in one corner of the room, waiting patiently the announcement of dinner. Neither did Mr. Bouverie keep them waiting, six o'clock having hardly struck when he was announced. He was of course received with that degree of respect and cordiality due to the supposed representative of rank and talent.

"How pleased Mr. Bouverie looks, my dear!" whispered Mrs. Hopwood to her husband.

"He already feels himself at home with us, my dear," answered the latter. "A good sign," he added sagaciously.

Dinner was speedily announced, when Mr. Sniggles, by a preconcerted plan, offered his arm to the lady of the house, leaving Mr. Bouverie to perform the same act of gallantry to Georgina; while Mr. Grayling and Mr. Hopwood brought up the rear—to the dining-room.

Nothing had been spared to make the dinner what it should be. A nobleman and ambassador did not dine with them every day. So excellent, indeed, was the entertainment, that Mr. Sniggles talked less than usual; and the constant repetition of "Thank you," and "If you please," were the only words Mr. Grayling was heard to utter. Indeed, the habits of the latter gentleman, on like occasions, were peculiar; he never opened his mouth till dinner commenced, and then never closed it till after the dessert.

Mr. Bouverie seemed to be the most animated of the party. Each little gaiety uttered by him was received

with the most marked delight. Mrs. Hopwood declared she had never laughed so much before—and poor Hopwood nearly choked himself in endeavoring to prove to his guest the sincerity of his mirth. Mr. Sniggles remarked, *en passant*, "What an infinite advantage social talent was to those in public life!" an observation which Mr. Hopwood echoed with great emphasis.

"What a fund of wit and entertainment he possesses!" whispered Mr. Sniggles to Mrs. Hopwood, in a voice loud enough to be heard by the individual he alluded to.

"Remarkable!" returned the lady.

"Was there ever any thing so good?" observed Hopwood, following up the same remark as Sniggles.

"The best I ever eat!" said old Grayling aloud—mistaking the object of praise.—"A bit of fat—thanky'e."

If the hospitable host could have stabbed the old fishmonger to the heart with a *coup d'œil*, Grayling would certainly have dropped at that instant from his chair; but the callous old gourmand was invulnerable to every thing in the way of common rebuke—his feelings could only be touched by taking his plate away.

Georgina said but little, although Mr. Bouverie frequently addressed her. Each time he spoke to her she felt the color rise to her face; and the confidence she had felt on many occasions, while conversing with others, appeared quite to have forsaken her. In vain she reasoned and remonstrated with herself—it was of no avail. The feeling of diffidence and uncertainty which his presence occasioned was not to be shaken off.

In the meantime the dinner was removed, and the dessert arrived, and Hopwood was impatient till he could give his wife the signal to withdraw. His mind was filled with the "important disclosure" which his friend Sniggles had promised to elicit from the guest during the after-dinner conversation. But upon Mrs. Hopwood's proposing so early to retire, Mr. Bouverie would on no account permit it. He entreated the ladies to remain a little longer; and of course the slightest intimation of a wish from so great a man was with them not to be combatted. Hopwood, however, contrived to afford his coadjutor an intelligent hint, that he might proceed to the task at once; and the wine passed round freely, as a further incentive to a confidential intercourse.

"What an extraordinary time we live in!" observed

Sniggles, after a slight pause, and with great gravity, but giving Hopwood a sly wink, by way of information, that the game was about to commence.

"Wonderful!" said Hopwood, earnestly. "Look at the railroads:—I hear that the Emperor of Russia is a great promoter of rail-roads," he added, looking at Mr. Bouverie.

"Really!" returned the other, with diplomatic reserve; "I have not read the papers lately." The two confederates looked at each other intelligently.

"Yes, sir," continued Sniggles, "we owe it all to the rapid increase of liberal opinions; but—" he added hastily, turning to Mr. Bouverie, as if he had spoken without thought;—"but I hope, sir, my remarks do not offend you:—I trust they do not:—I should be sorry if any incautious word——"

"Oh dear no, sir," said the diplomatist, bowing: "you spoke of opinions—if you mean, sir, that the increase of liberal opinions renders the times we live in more intelligent, I certainly agree with you," he said with mock gravity, endeavoring to restrain a broad smile, which rose at Sniggles's peculiar introduction of his subject.

Mr. Sniggles looked triumphantly at his friend at the bottom of the table. "Yes, sir; we are much indebted to the present ministry," continued Sniggles, who had for this occasion quite discarded his habit of quibbling and punning—he had undertaken the important task of unravelling the secrets of state, and he spoke with becoming dignity.

"Much indebted!" repeated Hopwood in a louder key, "we owe them every thing, sir—every thing! what do we not owe to the present ministry? Have they not given us the new poor law bill, and reduced our rates 50 per cent—we owe them our eternal gratitude, sir."

"How I do love to hear politics!" here interposed by way of parenthesis, Mr. Hopwood's intelligent helpmate. "It is so lively—so *very* amusing!"

"And yet the conservatives tell us that the further spread of democratic opinions will ruin the country," observed Sniggles, bowing by way of assent to Mrs. Hopwood's remark, and looking inquiringly at Mr. Bouverie.

"Why, I must say," commenced Mr. Bouverie, whose countenance had assumed the true diplomatic reserve, "I

must say, sir, that I respect a people who think for themselves —”

“Nothing can be more noble!” observed Sniggles.

“Or more enlightened than such a sentiment!” exclaimed Hopwood eagerly.

“Nevertheless,” continued the young man in a slow measured tone, “it must be confessed—hum—gentlemen—it must be accorded —”

“I understand you, sir,” interposed Sniggles, acting the part of prompter to the supposed diplomatist, “I clearly understand you—that it depends generally speaking—that is to say —”

“Nothing *can* be more just!” remarked Hopwood emphatically; “nothing can be more clear than my lord’s—than, I beg pardon—than Mr. Bouverie’s remark—it carries conviction—one seldom hears any argument more convincing!”

“You understand me then, gentlemen;” proceeded the diplomatist, playing with his dessert knife, as if abstractedly—his hearers were in breathless attention. “We must not deceive ourselves—hum—the times are replete with—hum—there is much to be said—hum —”

“There is, indeed,” observed Sniggles, shaking his head profoundly, and sighing as if he had the sins of the nation at his heart.

“Enough to make one’s hair stand on end!” continued Hopwood, in the same lugubrious strain; balancing his knife between his fingers in imitation of his guest, and assuming a look of political profundity, as if he knew more than he cared to speak.

“And yet I am not one of those,” continued the young man, “who think—who feel—who entertain—hum—and then mistaking a system—hum—fall back upon primitive errors; no, gentlemen,” he said, looking round, and speaking with impressive solemnity—“these are not *my* opinions!”

“Nor mine!” added Sniggles.

“Nor mine!” said Hopwood energetically, at the same time letting his knife fall on the floor; then stooping to regain it, capsized his plate, and broke it.

Mrs. Hopwood darted an angry look at him, which he took care not to meet.

“Ah! gentlemen, if we could at this moment peep ~~into~~ the cabinets of Europe, how different—yes, I repeat, how

different would the case be," added Mr. Bouverie slowly and sententiously.

"Egad! sir, you are quite right," said Sniggles, on whose countenance the importance of the subject was impressed. "Very right, indeed! nothing *can* be more true."

Hopwood inclined his head almost to the table, as if what had been uttered was conviction itself, and and he cast a glance towards his coadjutor significantly, as if he thought they were upon the eve of a grand disclosure, and feared to interpose a word, lest he should interrupt the current of thought which was evidently forcing its way through the capacious brain of the diplomatist.

Georgina cast a sly look at Mr. Bouverie, who seemed at that moment absorbed in the importance of his subject; for she was not the most simple-witted of maidens, and could only believe, from what she had heard, that he was amusing himself at the expense of her respected parents and their friends; a pursuit so congenial to her own fancy, that she was extremely amused at its progress. The extreme gravity of Mr. Bouverie's countenance, however, somewhat baffled her, and she waited to hear the *dénouement*.

"If we cast our eyes towards Spain," said the supposed member of the cabinet, "what do we see? hum——"

Hopwood and Sniggles shook their heads mournfully.

"Again, if we look at Russia—hum—what do we gather from that?"

"True, very true," added both gentlemen despondingly——

"But France, ah!" and sinking his voice to a whisper, as if he feared the very walls should catch the accent, "that is what I would speak of—hum—that is the point on which—hum——"

The two friends, at this point of interest, were leaning over and holding their breath, fearful of losing a single precious word—when old Grayling, not understanding a single syllable of what was going on, reached over the table to possess himself of the port wine—Hopwood's best—which had been standing untouched for the last quarter of an hour—when his capacious sleeve unluckily touched a long-necked bottle, and over it went, spouting out its blushing contents over Georgina's face and neck, like water from the hose of a fire-engine. The young lady gave a



faint scream, and would have fallen back with fright, had she not been supported by Mr. Bouverie.

Everything was now in confusion.

"O Mr. Grayling!" ejaculated Mrs. Hopwood, "how *could* you do so? how *could* you do so? at the same time jumping from her seat, and essaying to dry Georgina's face and neck with a table napkin. Georgina, after the first surprise was passed, was exceedingly inclined to laugh—but not so those around her;—Hopwood thumped the table with frenzy, whilst Sniggles looked at his friend, with a ludicrous affectation of despair.

"What a brute," ejaculated the latter to his friend, in a low key, whilst Mr. Bouverie was engaged assisting the ladies.

"Monstrous, monstrous, indeed," sighed Hopwood; "I shall never forgive myself for inviting him; such a critical point."

"The state secrets about to be laid open," whispered Sniggles, I may say, unreservedly.

"To interrupt *such* a conversation, at *such* a moment," said Hopwood, almost sobbing.

But the placid Grayling, totally regardless of the irreparable mischief he had caused, helped himself very composedly to the port wine he had reached, and stammered something intended as an apology to Georgina, who quickly assured him no harm was done. Mr. Bouverie laughing, made some pleasant remark *en passant* to the old gourmand, which gave the cue to Sniggles.

"It's the first *spirited* burst my friend Grayling ever made," said Sniggles, and he tittered, half afraid of indulging his humor on a subject so fatal as this had proved; but the old habit was too strong upon him; "eh! old crab-fish?" he added, and he facetiously poked the old fish-monger under the ribs with the point of his knife, causing him to spill his upraised glass of port wine over his trousers and the carpet. Sniggles was, however, quickly recalled to a proper sense of his duty, by a withering look from the ex-jeweller, whilst the original culprit, would undoubtedly have been annihilated by a similar demonstration of contempt and scorn, from the lady of the house, had he not been occupied in refilling his glass, and tossing it quickly off to prevent accidents.

Georgina, under the pretence of still drying her face, was biting her handkerchief to prevent an explosion of

mirth, and Mr. Bouverie was looking over the blind into the garden, doubtless with a view to obviate a similar exhibition.

During this state of things, the ladies withdrew, and Mr. Bouverie begged to be allowed immediately to join them.

In the drawing-room, Mr. Bouverie seemed to be entirely engaged conversing with Georgina, who having recovered her composure; by the perfect ease and amiability of his tone and manner, now spoke with gaiety, and even ventured some sly sallies on the events of the dinner table. Her wit was not lost upon the young man, who began to entertain a much higher opinion of her, than he did at first, arising, perhaps, from her present unembarrassed manner towards him; whilst Georgina, on her part, became more in love with him than ever.

Vain was every attempt made by Sniggles to renew the conversation, thus unhappily broken off. Mr. Bouverie appeared disinclined to enter again on the subject. In vain did the conspirators call into requisition an old newspaper; he evidently did not understand the hint; he was talking to Georgina about music, drawing, and plants.

"This is shocking," whispered Hopwood.

"Deplorable!" ejaculated Sniggles, with a most rueful visage; "upon the very point of discovery, and now not a word—not a syllable—ugh!"

"I wish that infernal Grayling was ——" and, without finishing the pious ejaculation intended for that respectable friend's benefit, the countenance of the wrathful, though deeply injured head of the family, assumed the appearance and complexion of a withered codling.

Shortly after, Mr. Bouverie excused himself from staying late, and took his departure, to the inexpressible mortification of the two keen-witted plotters, leaving the secrets of the cabinet still unrevealed, and his own rank and character still shrouded in mystery.

## CHAPTER VII.

"Patience and sorrow strove  
Which should express her goodliest."

Mr. BOUVERIE was not long walking the distance between Mr. Hopwood's villa and Beverley-house, and he met Agnes within a short distance of the gates. She had seen Mr. Bouverie approach, and had advanced to meet him.

Agnes had been seated at the open window, with her bonnet and shawl on, for some time, impatiently expecting him; for he had promised that evening to be explicit with her; to tell her of himself and his prospects; in fine, to relieve her mind from a load of anxiety. She expected the promised interview of that evening to be the climax of her hopes or fears. Her young heart had never before acknowledged the influence of love, and her tender and susceptible nature increased to their full force all the feelings, painful and otherwise, of which the "gentle passion" is so fruitful a source. Indeed, in her limited intercourse with the world, she had seen but few whom she could even respect; Mr. Bouverie, therefore, appeared to her as a being of a superior order. From their first meeting, he had paid her the most marked attention; and at their last interview, it will be recollected that he had confessed his attachment to her in unequivocal terms—an attachment which she repaid with all the gratitude of a youthful heart's first affection. It was a most disinterested passion on both sides; for they stood under peculiar circumstances with each other; neither knew the other's position in life, and from all that had passed, indeed, neither appeared to care. It is true that Mr. Bouverie, meeting her as he did, and seeing her mother's establishment, could not have the remotest notion of her real position in life, and which

position, indeed, Agnes, although considering her mother's conduct with regard to her quite inexplicable, was far from supposing to be otherwise than what the world calls respectable. Nevertheless, she felt some uneasiness at an explanation, which she knew must sooner or later take place, and to which Mrs. Maxwell would of course be a party."

At the moment of meeting Mr. Bouverie, however all these considerations were for the time forgotten. The pleasure of seeing him, and the knowledge that he had left the dinner-party—a party where Georgina would have it in her power to be as amiable as she pleased—and so early, to see her, banished her more sombre reflections. She was quite elated to think that for this time Georgina's witcheries had lost their spell, and the pleasant feeling of hope regained the ascendant in her mind.

"And you have come at last," cried Agnes, extending both her hands. "I know it is early to leave a dinner-party; but I have been sitting at the window looking down the road for some time:—and how is Georgina?"

"She is very well," returned Mr. Bouverie; "but we had no opportunity of talking much; her parents were so intent on learning the secrets of diplomacy. But you look pale, dear Agnes," he added with interest, taking her arm, and walking with her towards the house.

"I am well," she said, "but I have been all alone to-day; the Major and Mrs. Caisson are gone, and I feel almost deserted."

"But your mother?"

"Oh, she is in London, and possibly may stay some time. When she goes on business, she frequently stays a week or ten days," replied Agnes.

"Does she never take you with her?" asked Mr. Bouverie.

"Never!" After some little hesitation, she added, "You will think it strange, Mr. Bouverie, but from your kindness in taking an interest for me, I must confess to you, although painful to do so, that my mother is unhappily prejudiced against me; for what reason it is quite impossible to say."

"Strange!" exclaimed Mr. Bouverie. "You surely cannot have given her cause; your years and disposition forbid such a thought."

"I have been at school almost all my life, and have

scarcely ever seen her," returned Agnes; "and since I have been at home, I have mostly been to myself—my mother never inquires for me. I have made many endeavours to conciliate her, but in vain;" and her voice faltered, as she added, "I fear you will think she has some reason in my conduct; but she has not, indeed she has not."

"I am sure she cannot, my dear, kind-hearted Agnes," said Mr. Bouverie, in gentle accents. "It is, doubtless, one of those extraordinary freaks of our nature on which it is vain to attempt any explanation or reasoning. Time and circumstances may, perhaps, induce her to think differently. But come, we will not dwell on subjects which must be painful. I must tell you my evening's adventure at Mr. Hopwood's." And he gave her a long and humorous account of the events of the dinner, and of the manner in which he left the curiosity of the party unsatisfied. Knowing the peculiarities of the respectable Mr. Hopwood, Agnes felt highly amused at the recital.

"But, my dear Agnes, I intended to talk seriously to you this evening," continued Mr. Bouverie, "and we must not allow this opportunity to pass. I am a few years your senior, and in knowledge of, and intercourse with the world, considerably more so. I will therefore take upon me to advise, as well for you as myself but I will first explain to you something of my situation in life, that you may have a proper confidence in me."

"Oh! I cannot have greater confidence in you than I have at this moment," exclaimed Agnes. "Let me understand you as my heart teaches. Such serious explanations frighten me."

"But, my beloved girl, at present you do not know me," said Mr. Bouverie; "my position—my prospects—"

"I seek not to know—I care not to know," said Agnes. "Here, by your side, I am happy." A certain feeling of fear came over her, as he wished to explain farther of himself—of fear, lest he should prove greater than she dare aspire to. A few minutes since she was most anxious that an explanation should ensue; and now she dreaded it as something that would bereave her of hope.

"Why, my dear Agnes, I am not an ambassador, and am not at all intimate with the prime minister," he said, laughing, and half divining the reluctance of Agnes. "I have nothing very wonderful to disclose—it is but a mere

matter of every-day life—you must be informed at some time.”

“True,” she said; “very true—but I am very weak and foolish.”

“No, no; it is merely the natural timidity of your age,” said Mr. Bouverie; “but I must tell you that I have been to town this morning, and completed an arrangement which is most important to me; for it will comparatively release me from a profession which I dislike.”

“O, you do belong to a profession then?” said Agnes artlessly.

“If it may be called so—I belong to the army,” replied Mr. Bouverie. “You, of course, have heard of Captain Laurence, who is about to marry Miss Charlotte Vernon; I am in the same regiment with him; and I expect the Gazette to-morrow will announce his promotion to the majority, and mine to the vacant company. Now it is my earnest wish, after securing that step, to retire to a quiet country life; and I have been negotiating such a proceeding with a most respectable man of business, a confidential adviser of Mr. Vernon’s, who on my accidentally mentioning my wishes, suggested a plan, which, although somewhat irregular, is certain, and will effect my object, without my having occasion to seek assistance from relations, who would be decidedly hostile to such a step. Such, my dear Agnes, is the first part of my plan; and the second is, though chief in my heart, to ask you to share what I possess; which, though not brilliant, will be sufficient.”

Agnes was silent for a few moments, but her hand trembled in his grasp.—“I should be so happy,” she faltered; “it is my dearest wish to possess your—your good opinion.”

“Dear Agnes,” he said tenderly, “say rather of my love—you have it—you deserve it—and it will be my greatest happiness to merit a heart so valued as your own.”

“Here is my mother, I declare!” exclaimed Agnes, starting up, and looking anxiously towards the road; “that is certainly her carriage.”—Mr. Bouverie arose hastily, for they had entered the house, and were seated at the parlor window, which was open. He was for a moment irresolute, whether to await Mrs. Maxwell’s arrival, or to

write to her on the subject of Agnes next day; but quickly decided on the latter.

"Dear Agnes," he said, as he pressed her hand with affection, "inform your mother of what has passed immediately she arrives; and say, that I shall write for permission to wait upon her in the morning. Till then, God bless you." As he reached the hall-door, the carriage had drawn up, and Mrs. Maxwell was descending the steps. She looked up, seeing a stranger, and recognised Mr. Bouverie; but what was his surprise, as he lifted his hat to her in passing, in the mother of Agnes, to identify the equivocal agent of the morning! He passed on, however, without manifesting any sign of recognition; and Mrs. Maxwell ascended to the hall with hurried steps and perturbed manner, followed more slowly by a gentleman, who on disembarassing himself of his ample cloak, proved to be Mr. Robinson, the solicitor.

When Mr. Bouverie met Mrs. Maxwell that morning, for the purpose of making a definitive arrangement respecting the advantage of her interest in his behalf, he considered that he was treating with a lady—the wife, perhaps, of some person of influence, who having occasion for a sum of money—perhaps to make some purchase, or to cover some deficiency—might have made, for once, this use of her influence to raise it. He knew such things had been done, and although not of frequent occurrence in these times, still it was not a solitary instance of indirect patronage. The introduction, and, in fact, recommendation of so respectable a man as he had every reason to believe Mr. Robinson to be, forbade any suspicion that he could be the contemplated victim of a low intrigue, which, if successful against him, the irregular nature of the transaction would prohibit him from noticing publicly. But when he found that the lady of influence was Mrs. Maxwell, of whom he had already heard some whisperings in Egham, though regard for Agnes forbade him to listen to them; when he found it was through Mrs. Maxwell his appointment was to be looked for; he at once relinquished the hope—conceiving it could only be attained, if at all, through some tortuous or disreputable channel. He was aware that Mr. Maxwell was not in a situation in life to command influence: whatever influence Mrs. Maxwell possessed, must therefore be suspicious. Mr. Robinson's conduct seemed to require explanation;

but he little knew the wily solicitor's address in these matters. He was grieved beyond measure to be thus awakened from his security, and still more on account of poor Agnes than on his own. It was with these unexpected and tormenting reflections passing in his mind, that he overtook two gentlemen walking towards Egham, one of whom spoke to him as he was hastily passing, and who was no other than Mr. Hopwood. He was walking part of the way with his friend Sniggles, whom he had been entertaining at his house since Mr. Bouverie's departure; the strange mystery attending him having been a fertile subject for their ingenious speculations.

"Mr. Bouverie, I declare!" said Mr. Hopwood.

"From the Green, I suppose, sir," said Sniggles, who was rather elated with his host's brandy and water. "Beverly House stands pleasantly—thought we should have had the disposal of it when Lord Beverley left—but Mrs. Maxwell was too quick—snapt it up, sir, before we had a chance of knocking it down;—that is to say, not exactly Mrs. Maxwell, but my Lord —"

"Sniggles! Sniggles!" interposed Hopwood reproachfully, "you forget Mr. Bouverie."

"O, I beg pardon—a thousand pardons," stammered Sniggles; "I meant no insinuation."

"I trust my presence is no restraint, Mr. Hopwood," observed Mr. Bouverie; "I have not the pleasure of being acquainted with Mrs. Maxwell."

"So I should suppose," observed Mr. Hopwood drily.

"My dear sir, you speak enigmatically," said Mr. Bouverie.

"Why, Mr. Bouverie," returned the retired man of business, "you are a stranger here; and, as I have had the honor to receive you as a visiter, perhaps it is my duty—excuse the liberty I take—as the subject is mentioned, perhaps it is my duty to a gentleman of rank and connection—and one I hope to have the honor of calling my friend—to say, that the conduct of Mrs. Maxwell is most mysterious—pardon me if I offend."

"A distress in the house, only a week ago, for 12 $\frac{1}{2}$  taxes," interposed Sniggles.

"But I think I understood from my good friend the Major, that Mr. Bouverie was intimate with the family," continued Mr. Hopwood.

"No, indeed," replied Mr. Bouverie; "I have met Miss



Graham many times, and have certainly considered her a very charming young person."

Mr. Sniggles coughed.

"If the conduct of Mrs. Maxwell is open to doubt," added Mr. Bouverie, "certainly that of her daughter—if, indeed, Miss Graham be her daughter—is free from suspicion."

Mr. Hopwood made no reply.

"It would be cruel," continued Mr. Bouverie, "to visit the irregularities of a mother upon an innocent young creature. Sir, I say it is cruel to look upon Miss Graham with distrust, because her mother may give cause for scandal."

"Scandal!" cried Hopwood; "I know what I should think if Lord —— (but I must not mention names) were he to make my wife a present of a mansion, and furnish it at an expense of ——"

"Three thousand seven hundred and forty pounds, seventeen shillings; Crooks and Leggat showed me the invoice," interrupted Sniggles.

"Well, sir, what you say is doubtless on good authority," said Mr. Bouverie, with apparent indifference, though his inward emotions were far from enviable, on finding his suspicions of Mrs. Maxwell realised to their fullest extent. "Still no liberal mind would attach any unpleasantness from these things to Miss Graham. Poor girl, she claims our warmest commiseration in having the misfortune to belong to such a parent."

Neither Mr. Hopwood nor his companion made any reply.

"You are silent, gentlemen," continued Mr. Bouverie, with the pertinacity of one who is not satisfied unless he receives an unequivocal assent to what he has asserted.

"Why, really, Mr. Bouverie, I am sorry we have touched on this subject," said Hopwood; "if I speak, I fear I risk giving you offence."

"Indeed, sir, you need not fear that," said Mr. Bouverie.

"Then, my dear sir, if you will give me leave to speak plainly, I think you deceive yourself with regard to that young lady," said the ex-jeweller.

"Indeed, Mr. Hopwood! You surely do not mean to say Miss Graham has any knowledge of her mother's conduct?" said Mr. Bouverie, with warmth.

"Pardon me, Mr. Bouverie, what I am about to say is from my own personal knowledge," replied Mr. Hopwood. "I do not wish to injure the young lady; indeed, I have never noticed the circumstance to any other than my friend Sniggles."

"Not a word from me," interrupted the auctioneer—"mum's the word!"

"But as you appear to be deceived," continued Hopwood, "I think it my duty —"

"Pray, my dear sir, tell me—what do you know?" interrupted Mr. Bouverie, impatiently.

"Returning to my house one evening with the major, we unluckily disturbed a very pleasant *tête-à-tête* between Miss Graham and the major's nephew, Mr. Hervey, and in a most retired spot—the lane which flanks my garden. Would you believe it, sir—an assignation under my very windows—the abode of innocence and purity—an assignation, sir!"

"Stay, Mr. Hopwood," said Mr. Bouverie, stopping short in the road, and confronting him—"did I hear rightly?"

"Mr. Bouverie, I am not given to romance; I am a plain matter of fact man," continued Mr. Hopwood; "the major was with me, and witnessed it. Judge the feelings of a father, sir, to see the companion of his child in such a situation. I heard her very words to him—I upbraided her for outraging the asylum of innocence. She has never been in my house since, sir, and I never intend she shall. It was no accidental meeting, sir, but in the lane, by the gate of my garden. Since then I find her mother is a notorious woman, sir—notorious!"

"O, very," hiccupped Sniggles.

"Those are the facts, Mr. Bouverie," continued Mr. Hopwood more calmly; "you can judge for yourself."

Mr. Bouverie continued his walk; his feelings could scarcely be suppressed; anguish preyed at his heart.

"Mr. Hopwood," he said slowly and with effort, "your situation in life, and respectable character, forbid me to suppose you can utter anything but truth; much less that you, a father yourself, could wantonly traduce the character of a young, and, as I have believed, a virtuous-minded girl. But, sir, it is well to know the truth, and I thank you, though I care not to conceal how painful it is to me. I wish you a good night, sir;" and, bowing

slightly to Mr. Sniggles, he walked hastily on, leaving Mr. Hopwood and his companion at the door of the King's Head.

Agnes rose next morning early; she had evidently passed a sleepless night, for her eyes were swollen with weeping. She had encountered her mother the evening before on the departure of Mr. Bouverie, whose flushed cheeks, and angry glance, told her that something had occurred on the instant more than ordinary. She made hasty inquiries respecting Mr. Bouverie, on which Agnes related the circumstances of his being there; Mrs. Maxwell then assailed her child with a torrent of coarse invective; accused her of having conspired against her interest—that she was ruined by her—and in fact carried her fury to such a pitch, that poor Agnes was obliged to seek refuge from her violence.

It was fortunate the solicitor was present, for he succeeded, at last, in procuring peace. Mrs. Maxwell, however, forbid her daughter ever to appear in her presence again, and insisted that on the next morning she should quit her house.

It was under these painful circumstances, that Agnes arose the next morning, without a home, and without a friend whose protection she could claim. From what transpired on the night previous, she could gather from her mother something of a prior knowledge of Mr. Bouverie and that her own intimacy with him had affected her mother's interest. If she went from her present home, she knew not whither to direct her steps; and remain she could not—indeed, she dare not—for she knew well the implacability of her cruel parent. Whilst pondering in her mind what course she should pursue, Mr. Jabez Hunsman approached her.

"Well, Miss Agnes," said Mrs. Maxwell's major-domo; "pretty tantrums your mother has been in about this ere friend of yours; it's spoilt her game; howsomever, no fault of yours neither, as I can see—only accident; but then she is such a precious tartar, and no mistake."

Agnes could make no reply to this very eloquent harangue, but with tears.

"Come, that's of no use," continued Jabez; "you know I brought you up, and I look on you as more my child than I do her'n. I'm thinking what's to be

done, for you can't stay here, nohow. My eyes, if she catches you here when she gets up, she'll turn the house out o' windows; but she is such a rum un. I'm thinking d'ye see, as you had better go to London, to my wife for awhile, till something is done."

Agnes was grateful even for this appearance of kindness, so friendless was she, and forlorn at that moment; and she expressed her sense of the obligation.

"Why, as for the matter of that," said Jabez, "you owe me precious little, I can tell you, but you may find friends where you don't expect; it may be sooner, or it may be later, only I can tell you one thing," and he whispered in her ear; "I am getting sick of your Beelzebub of a mother, and no mistake about that either. Now do you do as I tell you, and you'll see something mayhap turn up arter all. Now don't cry, there's a good gal, and mind what I say; I'll send you your traps arter you in the course of the day; stage starts at half-arter-nine."

Just as Agnes, was about to depart a servant put a letter into her hands; trembling, she broke the seal; the letter contained but a few lines;—

"I have deceived myself—I neither blame nor reproach you; but never expect to see me again. On my return home last night, I met Mr. Hopwood—I will not wound your feelings by repeating the cause of your continued absence from his family.

"EDWARD BOUVERIE.

"*To Miss Agnes Graham.*"

Her hand dropped listlessly to her side, as the poor girl read these, to her, cruel lines. This was a climax to her misery she had but little expected; her eyes streamed with tears, as she folded the note, and placed it in her bosom; then alone, and almost broken-hearted, she quitted her mother's roof to seek another asylum.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"To doubt's an injury; to suspect a friend  
Is breach of friendship."

It is the common misfortune of those who endeavor to portray the strange shiftings and ever-varying undulations of an inconsistent character, that they themselves become obnoxious to the charge of inconsistency. There is indeed, in our modern days, so strong a bias in favor of what is called consistency of character, that they who strive to present a faithful transcript of nature are too frequently accused of distorting and belying her. But as, in these volumes, we profess to furnish a true history, not to tender a mere fable—since we have only common flesh and blood to offer, and not those wax-work representations which wig-makers delight to honor, and which some of our present writers aspire to imitate—we hope we shall be excused if we proceed to draw our portraits from the life. They are not represented as they ought to be, but as they are; and there is no "faultless monster" in *our* history.

It might be supposed that Vernon, having succeeded in averting the progress of circumstances which threatened to overwhelm him, would have acquired a fresh accession of spirits. Fortune also, which had been uncommonly kind to him at the gaming table, might naturally be imagined to encourage a belief of her returning devotion to him. But as we have shown, Vernon was not disposed to draw any consolatory conclusions from these facts. At an earlier period of his life, they would have sufficed to fortify him in the conviction that Fate never intended he should be amenable to the ordinary mischances of life. At that time, sufficient for the day was the evil thereof. But now, when the storm was lowering above his head, when the gloom was thickening around him, these were

but as flashes which only contributed to discover the utter darkness that beset him. He arose, therefore, sleepless and unrefreshed, from his pillow, and descended to the breakfast parlor, in a state of mind which the mental torture of the preceding night had in no slight degree aggravated.

Vernon had of late felt a certain restraint in the company of his family, and was relieved at finding that his elder sister alone was present. He could much easier endure the calm placidity of Miss Vernon, than the soft and gentle expression, and the pleading eyes, that seemed unintentionally to reproach him, of Charlotte. He however inquired about her, and was informed that she was unwell, and confined to her chamber.

"She appears to dwell too constantly upon our recent loss," remarked Vernon.

"I do not wonder at it," answered his sister; "she was, you know, our mother's favorite; and once," she added after a pause,—"she was yours, Horace; but now"—

"I have given her no cause to suspect that she is otherwise," said Vernon, hastily; "I hope not."

A long silence ensued, during which the eyes of Miss Vernon rested unconsciously upon her brother. She perceived, at length, that he was disconcerted by the earnestness of her gaze, and as she withdrew her eyes, she sighed.

"Why, Mary," said Vernon, looking up, "a sigh from you is rather an unusual event—I think we may call it so"—

"I do not often sigh," answered Miss Vernon; "but I feel nevertheless. They suffer most, Horace, who never sigh."

"What do you mean?" inquired Vernon, with interest.

"The loss we have recently sustained is past," answered his sister, "and it is our duty to be resigned. But I confess my sister is a cause of much anxiety to me at the present moment."

"I do not understand you—pray be explicit with me."

"I will be so," said Vernon; "I have decided upon speaking to you for some days; and I am glad this opportunity has presented itself. We are very much astonished and grieved, Horace, at the extraordinary change in your manners and conduct towards Captain Laurence."

"Indeed! I am not aware that I had exhibited any want of proper respect or attention to that gentleman," said Vernon coldly.

"The very words you now utter, and the manner in which you have spoken them," returned his sister, "convince me that you have conceived some prejudice against him."

"Not at all," said Vernon, "not at all; but pray allow me to inquire, whom did you mean when you said *we*?"

"Charlotte and myself, and I may add, Laurence also, who has mentioned it more than once, and who is very much concerned at your apparent coldness."

"I am very much obliged to him for his concern," said Vernon, with a contemptuous smile; "and for the interest he appears to have acquired in my house. And so he makes you his confidant, I suppose—he presumes to complain of me to my sisters, and obtains willing listeners?"

Miss Vernon was mortified; but the shade, that had for a moment clouded her brow, vanished.

"I should be offended with you, Horace," she said calmly, "but that I know you so well, and the strange weakness which possesses you, and which, only because I do not understand it, I pity. You know that Charlotte has accepted his hand; you know that it was our mother's express will that they should be united; and until I have some reason to alter my opinion of him, I must and I will insist, that the contract shall be fulfilled."

"You speak peremptorily, madam," said Vernon, slightly coloring; "what if I say, it shall not?"

"Horace Vernon," said his sister; "I am surprised at this strange conduct, which to me is inexplicable. You do not know the misery you are about to bring upon your family. Is the happiness of your sister of no weight? or do you consider it a trivial thing to render her miserable for life?"

"It is because I do not wish to render her so," returned Vernon; "that I am opposed to the match."

"You *are* then opposed to the match?" repeated his sister in surprise—"let us at least hear your reason for being so."

"I do not like the man," said Vernon doggedly.

"Why not?"

"I have many reasons," returned the banker, in the tone of one who, whatever reasons he may entertain, for

or against anything, is not disposed at the moment to state them.

"I perceive it is useless to argue with you," said Miss Vernon, and she arose. "It will ever be my duty, Horace, to see the last wishes of my mother fulfilled; and though you interpose your authority, I shall endeavor to prevail upon my sister to disregard an opposition which, it is plain, is the result of a most unfounded and ungenerous prejudice."

Miss Vernon was about to leave the room, when Vernon stepped between her and the door. He took her by the hand.

"My dear Mary," said he, "why this precipitation? What have I done to justify so sudden a step as the one you threaten? Sit down, I beseech you."

"If you knew, Horace," said his sister, reseating herself, "how you distress me by your causeless distrust of Captain Laurence, I am sure you would endeavor to remove it from your breast. I am really alarmed for Charlotte. The loss of her mother has severely affected her health, which has ever been delicate; and the fear which she has had too much cause to entertain, that you are averse to her union with Captain Laurence, so preys upon her feelings, that I dread the consequences."

Vernon was silent; he was grieved, and almost ashamed of his suspicions of Laurence; for which he could not but be sensible that he had no just or sufficient grounds. But although he loved his younger sister with as much affection as it is usual for a brother to feel, yet, if the truth must be told, he loved his own will, and the arbitrary indulgence of it, much better, and with more sincerity, than any other thing or person in the world.

"I have not," said he at length, "observed the change in Charlotte which you appear to imagine; for I think it a mere fancy. You will do me the justice to believe, Mary, that I would do any thing in my power to secure her happiness."

"I do believe it," said his sister. "Why then thwart the happiness of one you love? You form an unfortunate opinion of an honorable and worthy man, without, as it seems to me, the slightest reason for so doing."

"The truth is," said Vernon, "I believe him to be a mere fortune-hunter, a mercenary adventurer, and I do not



wish to see my sister the victim or the sacrifice to his artifices."

"You did not think this at first."

"True."

"Then what recent cause have you for suspecting it?"

"He waited upon me abruptly yesterday morning," said Vernon, evading the question, "at a time, of all others, when I was least prepared to enter upon the subject. He spoke of the possibility of his regiment being ordered abroad;—pshaw! and I could see in his manner a strong desire to learn how much he was likely to get, if he took my sister off my hands. I should not have much wondered had he put the case upon that footing, and in those very words."

"You wrong him, Vernon; shamefully wrong him—upon my life, you do," said Miss Vernon, with warmth; "you degrade yourself by such base suspicions; for they are base."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," interrupted Vernon; "you take a friendly interest in his welfare, I perceive. I wrong him, no doubt. If I do, Mary, I am sorry for it. You women," he added with bitterness, "are proverbial for your insight into the characters of men. We, of the weaker sex, are blind; we cannot see each other; we have no judgment in these matters."

"I am sure you are grossly deceiving yourself in this instance," said Miss Vernon.

"Well, then," resumed her brother, "what will you think of this man, when I tell you, that in spite of the possibility of his being ordered abroad, he was heard to express a wish to purchase this house? what cause had he to suspect that I intended to part with it? but the purchase money was to be paid out of Charlotte's dowry, I presume."

"Who told you that he had expressed such wish?" inquired Miss Vernon.

"Robinson, who called here yesterday, and to whom he communicated his desire to become owner of the place."

"Mr. Robinson was here yesterday, certainly," said Miss Vernon; "and I dare say, in the course of conversation, the captain may have spoken slightly respecting such a contingency; indeed, he has often said the same thing to me, for he is very partial to the situation. But

what of this? It is just what any person might unthinkingly say. I hope Mr. Robinson has not so reported his words, as to cause you to mistake the real construction that should be put upon them."

"Oh no; Robinson is a worthy fellow—a very worthy fellow," said Vernon; "but no more of this at present. I will endeavor to arrive at a just opinion of Laurence; but if I do not find him worthy of Charlotte, I assure you I shall withhold my consent."

"Nor should he marry her with mine," said Miss Vernon, "if I believed him unworthy of her. I am glad to hear you say what you have just now spoken, and I hope you will discard all prejudice. An hour's conversation with him would, I am sure, remove it."

"Well, let us drop the subject for the present," said Vernon. "Here," and he took out his pocket-book; "here are ten thousand pounds, which I shall give you to keep for me. It is the repayment of a debt by an old friend of mine, who I hope will shortly render me a still greater return."

Miss Vernon received the notes. "I will promise to keep them safely for you," she said; "but I fear I cannot afford you any interest for your money," she added with a smile.

"Never mind that—it will be safe with you at all events. I must go to town to-day. We are rather busy in the city just now. Tell Charlotte to keep up her spirits, for I expect her to be quite recovered when I return this evening."

And Vernon mounted his horse, and rode with all speed to the banking-house, at which place he intended for the future regularly to show himself, until he could bring matters round once more.

## CHAPTER IX.

"Fair-faced deceit, whose wily conscious eye  
Ne'er looks direct. The tongue that licks the dust  
But, when it safely dares, as prompt to sting."

It was about eight o'clock in the evening, when Mr. Robinson, having carefully descended the three crazy steps of the Egham stage, which seemed to have been contrived expressly with a view to the prostration of the inside passengers of that vehicle, paid his fare with much ostentatious delay, and leisurely directed his steps towards the house of Mrs. Maxwell. He found that lady in the drawing-room, and seemingly awaiting his arrival.

"Well, madam," said the solicitor, approaching her with romantic urbanity, "I hope the gentleman obeyed the summons which you did me the honor of making me the medium of conveying to him."

"Yes; he came, certainly," said Mrs. Maxwell, shrugging her shoulders, which Mr. Robinson, at that moment, thought he had never seen look so symmetrically rounded before; "he came, certainly, Robinson; but I fear, after all, we shall be able to make nothing of him."

"Indeed, that is awkward, madam," said Robinson, shaking his head; "but, remember, Mrs. Maxwell, this makes good what I told you a day or two since; I said that my putting in a restraint was the only means of working upon his feelings at the present moment; and I do think, if we shall at last succeed in our endeavors, one-third of the amount will not be too much for my exertions in the matter."

"You drive a hard bargain, Robinson. I think that is the phrase, is it not?" answered the lady. "But, however, if you can bring the man to his senses, we shall not

quarrel about terms. For my part, I don't know what is come to the man, of late; he is strangely altered."

"Why, my dear madam," said the solicitor, "your friend Lord Walgrave tickled him—made him dance, I may say, to a very serious tune; and between us, what with his continued gaming losses for so long a period, and other matters, I fear, when you have got this two thousand pounds, should you be fortunate enough to succeed, you may take your leave of Mr. Vernon for ever."

"How so? what's the matter, then?" said Mrs. Maxwell, with anxiety; "any thing wrong besides what I know?"

"My dear madam, my dear madam," said Robinson, with an air of importance, placing his fore-finger to the side of his nose, "not *any thing* wrong, but *all* wrong, *all* wrong."

"Good heavens! Robinson, I am very sorry to hear this."

"Yes, yes," said the solicitor with emphasis; "it is a hard case—a very lamentable circumstance, when a gentleman like Mr. Vernon goes to the dogs, as he is now certain of doing. I know all his affairs, madam, and I am sure it distresses me very much, to know that I can be of no service to him—none whatever. I participate in your sorrow, Mrs. Maxwell; I am really grieved."

Here Robinson moaned with great perseverance, and raised his handkerchief to his eyes.

"I did not mean that," said Mrs. Maxwell, testily; "of course I am sorry for the poor man—it's only natural that I should be; but the question is, what is to become of me? what am I to do, Mr. Robinson?"

"The Lord alone knows," answered the solicitor, swaying his head to and fro.

"Now you mischievous, quizzing creature, you," said Mrs. Maxwell, suddenly casting an arch glance at the solicitor, who, of whatever faults he might have been convicted, was certainly not prone to mischief in sport, or, in fact, of quizzing at any time; "you know you have been deceiving me all this while; Vernon is not so far gone as you represent."

"I wish I could assure you he was not," said Robinson; and Mrs. Maxwell could see at once, by the expression of his face, that he was, in this instance, stating the truth.

"He is fast going, madam; and nothing, I fear, can save him at this crisis."

"Robinson, I am disgusted with you," said Mrs. Maxwell, deeply offended; "I thought you had more respect, more friendship for me, than to have permitted me to remain in ignorance of Mr. Vernon's affairs, until it is too late to obtain what, in justice to myself, I ought to have made a point of receiving:—I have done with you, after this, sir."

"Done with me, madam? very well, madam," said Robinson in a huff, and he arose from his seat; "and although you have done with me, I may find some one else to begin with. You are an ungrateful woman, Mrs. Maxwell—very ungrateful. It is not proper to behave thus to me: I knew nothing of the precise situation of Vernon till within a day or two; and it will be a miracle if I do not get into a scrape in consequence of my ignorance. Nobody knew, till yesterday, when there was a run upon the house; and I, madam, have discounted bills for him to a large amount, and I shall be left in the lurch—in the lurch, Mrs. Maxwell."

Robinson, at the conclusion of this speech, sank, panting for want of breath, into his chair, and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, languidly.

"Well, well, I suppose I must forgive you," said Mrs. Maxwell, apparently appeased, and really alarmed; for, through Robinson's professional dexterity, and legal acumen, Mrs. Maxwell had derived, in many ways, various advantages, and expected to derive many more. "You have been a good friend to me, Robinson, many times, and I know you to be an honest man."

"You did not say so once," said Robinson, who was sometimes slow to forgive, when the offending party showed any expressions of penitence; "you did not think so in the Earl of Charleston's time, Mrs. Maxwell."

"I was wrong then," said the lady coaxingly, and she laid her hand with friendly familiarity on the shoulder of the solicitor; "but I know you better now. Come, Robinson, I must confess you have been a "serviceable monster" to me—hav'nt you now? Come, say you forgive me."

This was said with so enchanting a softness, that Mr. Robinson could do no less, as a man of sentiment, than accept a renewal of friendship so delightfully proffered.

He gazed upwards with a benevolent smile, such as old philanthropists bestow upon the object of their affection, and said, as he shook his head with wicked pleasantry :—

“You know I have been the best friend you ever had in the world—the most constant; and I don’t regret it; for I feel a real, a true affection for you, Maria.”

Mrs. Maxwell averted her face for a moment, to conceal the smile, half ridicule, half contempt, which the solicitor had succeeded in conjuring up; but matters of mighty import soon recalled her to a more serious state of feeling.

“Well, but, my good friend, what is to be done with this man?” she inquired with great anxiety; “do you think he will keep his word with me? he promised to see me this evening.”

“You know best, madam, what dependence is to be placed upon Mr. Vernon’s word,” answered Robinson, whose fit of sentimental tenderness was but of short duration; “I think myself, you may expect him.”

“If I could only manage to get this money from him, I should be happy; for indeed, Robinson, I was getting sadly tired of him; he is too hasty and capricious, and requires too much trouble to manage; I think I shall, in future, attach myself to Lord Walgrave.”

“There you are right, Mrs. Maxwell,” said Robinson with emphasis; “there I applaud your taste and discrimination; he is really a very promising young nobleman—a man from whom great things may be expected.”

“And I think my expectations from that quarter will not be disappointed, Robinson; I shall, I dare say, require your assistance from time to time; for he has not always ready money at command, you know.”

“Always happy to be employed,” said Robinson, rubbing his hands; “and so Vernon is to go to the wall, is he?”

“There is no alternative,” said the lady; “he is drawn dry, it appears; nothing more to be had there.”

“No more than Paddy shot at, as I was accustomed to say, when a youth,” said Mr. Robinson.

“And what was that?” inquired Mrs. Maxwell, with simplicity.

“Nothing,” said the solicitor; and the two companions burst into a fit of pleasant laughter.

It was at this moment, and unobserved by either of the exhilarated parties, that Vernon entered the room.

"I hope I may congratulate Mrs. Maxwell, on the withdrawal of her perplexities," said the banker advancing; "the mirth in which I find our friend Robinson and yourself indulging, intimates nothing less."

"Indeed no," returned Mrs. Maxwell, with admirable presence of mind; "Robinson had been assuring me that I might depend upon you; and I was certain that you would not permit me, for so paltry a sum, to be molested by so unpleasant an annoyance; in the meanwhile, Mr. Robinson was relating a laughable anecdote."

"A strange adventure that befel me in my youth," interfered the solicitor; who by this time had recovered the first shock of the banker's sudden appearance; "a trivial circumstance which, I am happy to say, banished for awhile the wretched spirits in which I found Mrs. Maxwell, when I entered."

"You are as good as a physician in these cases, Robinson," said the banker, taking a chair; "but may I not also hear this strange adventure of yours; I am sure if it can raise a smile, it will not come at an inopportune period to me; for my spirits are none of the best, I assure you."

"Are they not indeed?" exclaimed Mrs. Maxwell with tender solicitude; "you keep yourself too much within doors, I fear, Mr. Vernon."

"The story is not worth relating," cried Robinson, who, during the short reprieve for which he was indebted to Mrs. Maxwell, had been tasking his memory, and racking his invention, to very little purpose; "the merest trifle, I give you my word. But my dear sir, to advert to business, what can be done for this poor lady? she is very awkwardly circumstanced. Believe me, I have done every thing I can for her, during the day, but to no purpose; the adverse party is inflexible."

Vernon pondered for some minutes. "This is a distressing circumstance, Maria," he said, at length, "and the more so to me, since I really have it not in my power to be of the least service to you at present."

"Oh! do not say so, Vernon, for Heaven's sake, do not say so!" cried Mrs. Maxwell, wringing her hands. "What will become of me, if this affair should transpire. Oh! for this once—for the last time do oblige me, Horace—I know, I am sure you will."

"Compose yourself, my dear good lady," exclaimed

Robinson, with strong symptoms of sympathy; "you see, sir," he added, turning to the banker, "how these little inconvenient disarrangements of domestic economy distress the ladies, unused as they are to legal proceedings. Come, my dear Mr. Vernon, what do you say? you will be adding another, to your many noble actions."

"My good fellow, what *can* I say," expostulated Vernon; "I would do it, were it in my power, but it is not, I give you my word of honor."

"That we must all believe," said Robinson with a bow; "but surely, sir, you misapprehend the amount—2000*l.*—"

"I cannot do it—I can't spare the money," said Vernon decisively.

"Now, my dear madam," remonstrated the solicitor, approaching Mrs. Maxwell, who had sunk upon the sofa, and had buried her head in one of the cushions, in an agony of grief, "you must calm this perturbation—you must, indeed. Suffer me to speak calmly with your friend Mr. Vernon, on this business."

"Well, sir," he resumed, again addressing himself to the banker, "I was about to say —"

"Nothing," interrupted Vernon, "which it can be of any service to Mrs. Maxwell or to myself that I should hear. I repeat, that I cannot spare the money at this moment."

"I have done," cried the solicitor, bowing very humbly; "I will say no more. Mr. Vernon can do nothing for you, madam," he adding, sighing, as he turned once again towards the lady, "I am sorry—very sorry for it.—The thing must take its course."

Here a fresh burst of sobs proceeded from Mrs. Maxwell, whilst Mr. Robinson silently appealed, by sundry woe-begone shakes of the head and melancholy shrugs, to the banker.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said Robinson at length, with a pat on the thigh: "you say, my good sir, you cannot conveniently spare the money just now—I myself will advance it."

"You good, generous man!" cried Mrs. Maxwell in a broken voice.

"I am not a monied man," resumed Robinson; "far from it; but I will distress myself to be of service to the lady at this moment. She must not be left at the mercy



of such wretches as those into whose hands she has fallen—and——”

“Very honorable—very friendly!” cried Vernon.

“And,” proceeded the solicitor, with a slight hesitation, “I will take your note of hand, at three months, for the amount.”

Mrs. Maxwell gazed with an intensely imploring earnestness at the banker during the silence which ensued.

“Well,” said Vernon, drumming with his fingers upon the table; “I did not expect such a conclusion to your speech, Robinson; however, you will trust me——”

“Any time, my dear sir, will do for the note of hand—a mere memorandum to that effect will suffice now.”

“Well, well—hand me the pen and ink.”

Mr. Robinson was ready at a moment. It was by chance that Vernon directed his eyes towards Mrs. Maxwell, and thence rapidly at the face of the solicitor. A whole volume of iniquity was revealed to him in that instant; and yet, when he again surveyed the parties, an expression appropriate to the occasion pervaded the countenance of each. He threw down the pen.

“I will not give you this memorandum, Robinson,” said he, and he arose suddenly. “I have thought better of it;—I will never again permit myself to be made the fool I have been.”

“You are a villain, Vernon!” cried Mrs. Maxwell, enraged beyond the bounds of discretion; “I always thought so;—I never believed you my friend.”

“It is a pity, madam,” said Vernon, calmly, “that you accepted favors at my hands which led me to believe you had a better opinion of me.”

“Hush!—for heaven’s sake, hush!” cried Robinson, in an apparent agony of distress. “Mrs. Maxwell knows not what she says. Be calm, I implore you, madam.” And he added, in a lower tone, “What a fool you are, to expose yourself thus!—beg his pardon.—Stay, Mr. Vernon—stay, for goodness’ sake!”

“When we meet in future,” said Vernon, “I hope, Maria, we shall meet as friends. It is probable we shall seldom meet again. Good night, madam. Robinson, good night.” And the banker hastily withdrew, leaving the worthy couple to a scene of crimination and recrimination, easier to be “conceived than described,” and not easily to be done in any way.

## CHAPTER X.

————— “Dream after dream ensues,  
And still they dream that they shall still succeed,  
And still are disappointed.”

THE constant attendance of Vernon at the banking-house was calculated to allay the feeling of despondency and alarm which alternately beset him. He could not fail to perceive, since the interview with Warkworth, that his partner had adopted suspicions of him, for which every succeeding day supplied him with additional materials. Warkworth was naturally a nervous and even a timid man; but the first law of nature was strongly impressed upon him; and the instinct of self-preservation taught him that his connection with Vernon, if of much longer continuance, would probably operate to the ruin of both. He was, at the same time, strengthened by the advice of gentlemen of the highest respectability in the mercantile world, who insisted, as a *sine quâ non* of their future transactions with him, that he should embrace the earliest opportunity of shaking off his partner.

It must be said, in justice to Warkworth, that the necessity he felt in resorting to so extreme a measure was most painful to him. He had been on the most intimate and friendly terms with Vernon's father; they had for many years conducted a prosperous business together; and Warkworth was not insensible of the great advantage he had derived from the knowledge of business and mercantile acuteness of the son. He was, at the same time, by no means a person who delighted to wound unnecessarily the feelings of any human being. But whilst he looked with almost trembling commiseration upon the impending fate of Vernon, it may readily be believed

that his manner towards him assumed, insensibly, a restraint—not to say a coldness—which Vernon, in his then state of mind, was too ready to ascribe to selfish, if not to vindictive feeling.

His sisters, during the last two months, had been residing at Brighton; to which place the physicians had ordered the younger, the state of whose health for some time past had been a source of great anxiety to Miss Vernon. The banker was not unwilling to be left entirely to himself during this crisis of his fortune; and when he did even dare to see them for a day, which was but seldom, there was a moody restlessness in his manner, which, although he was sensible of it, he could not discard, and which made him too happy (if there was any happiness in the case) to return to his own house. He saw Laurence, also, several times during this period. His dislike, too, of the captain, which in the first instance had been a mere pretext to himself, to conceal the real cause of his opposition to the marriage—which cause was fear lest the state of his affairs should be discovered,—that dislike, so fondly indulged, had now increased to positive and perfect hatred. He felt assured that, now, the marriage could never take place; he knew that he had put it out of his power to fulfil the dying command of his mother, and that his sisters in a short time would be reduced to a state of comparative beggary. And then he thought he knew Laurence too well to believe that he would be disposed to accept his sister's hand, under the altered circumstances of the family. He construed, with morbid eagerness, the importunate solicitations of Laurence, into a greedy impatience to possess himself of his sister's supposed fortune; and he hated him for it with an intensity which amounted to loathing.

One circumstance was by no means the least of his perplexities—namely, the debt he had contracted with Mrs. Livingstone. He had latterly received several letters from that lady, requesting the immediate return of her money; and they were couched in terms most of all repulsive to a man of ordinary feeling—consisting, as they did, of appeals to his honor—to his generosity—to his sense of justice. They also set forth the distress, the misery, the distraction, to which herself and family would be reduced, by his non-fulfilment of his promise to repay the principal within the time specified. Living-

stone, too, had waited upon him with obstinate and untiring pertinacity; and the half servile, half insolent tone of this gentleman, whilst it disconcerted, almost provoked him frequently to kick the persevering applicant out of the house.

There is no state of mental distress, to which a man may be reduced, which comparative trifles will not sensibly increase. It is then, indeed, that we most of all suffer from these trivial annoyances. The conduct of Mr. Robinson had undergone a great, a sensible change. His manner was much altered; his former subservient humility had given place to a cold self-possessed formality, which sometimes barely kept within the bounds of common politeness. Whenever Vernon called upon him on business, he received him with the distant air of one who has begun to suspect that in a very short time a vast difference will be observable between himself and the other—a sort of gulf, as it were, in which all human feeling is forthwith to be buried. Upon one or two occasions, the formerly obsequious solicitor had gone so far as to instruct Mr. Jeffries, to inform Mr. Vernon that he could not be seen at present, and that he must call when Mr. Robinson was more at leisure; a behest which Mr. John Jeffries obeyed with a zest, indicating his perfect sympathy with the spirit in which it was put forth. And now for the first time in his life, or if not for the first, for the only time in which he had been *made* to experience the miserable truth, Vernon began to feel the almost intolerable insults which ever attend a sinking man. The claims of gratitude forgotten—the ties of old and once-valued friendship suddenly snapped asunder—the usages of common civility disregarded;—these are the inevitable consequences attendant upon a rich man's downfall. But there is nothing new to be said upon this subject. Poets have sung—prose writers have prosed—moralists have preached, a warning never yet heeded, a lesson too often learned, but always learned too late.

To describe the torture, the anguish, the desperation of Vernon during the fortnight preceding the day on which Hopwood's bills fell due—that were impossible. Sometimes, when he had succeeded in enforcing a temporary calmness upon himself, he endeavored to call to mind some practicable means of raising the money to renew the bills, if only for a month or two, until he could contrive

to bring his available assets into a focus. But, alas! he had deceived himself too often before—he had too frequently put his trust in his contingencies which perpetually betrayed him; and the fear was, that in this last instance, he might plunge another into ruin. No, he felt that he had no further resources—that his time was come—that his last bolt was shot, and that he must bear the issue as became him.

Vernon was one of those men who never bestir themselves till the last moment; and who, accordingly, do not give their chances fair play against fortune. Even in this case his fatal infirmity had possessed him; and it was not until it was too late to take any effectual measures, that he was reminded of the absolute necessity of adopting them. What if he were to apply to Hopwood, and get him to hold over the bills for a short time? But the tumult of anxiety under which he had been suffering for some days past, had completely unnerved him. He had walked half way up the gravel path leading to Hopwood's door, when his courage forsook him. What would Hopwood suspect, and justly? He would compromise the honor and character of the house, by requiring an accommodation for so paltry a sum as the amount of the bills held by that gentleman. Or perhaps Hopwood would discover that he had accepted the bills without the cognisance of his partners, and his reputation would be lost for ever. He retreated hastily from the house, congratulating himself upon his foresight in perceiving those probabilities. He hastened to town, deciding to call upon Robinson, who perhaps might be able to serve him in this emergency. Under circumstances like these, if a man has any pride left, it is not obtrusively prominent; and Vernon was not disposed at that moment to reflect upon the slights he had recently borne at the hands of the solicitor. He found Mr. Robinson at home, and entered his office without ceremony.

"Well, Mr. Vernon, and what is *your* pleasure?" demanded the solicitor, gravely.

"Those bills of Hopwood's, Robinson, fall due to-morrow."

"They do so," said the other; "and I was this moment writing a note, which I intended to have sent to your banking-house by the hands of Mr. Jeffries, to apprise you of that circumstance, fearing you might have forgotten it."

"I never forget matters relating to business," said Vernon.

"I am glad of it, sir," answered Robinson; "you will pardon me, but I have been in a state of considerable alarm respecting those bills. Will they be taken up?"

"What reason have you to doubt it?" said Vernon; and his voice trembled as he spoke.

"None at all, my dear sir," said Robinson, with something of his old manner; "but I really should get into such disgrace with my friend, Mr. Hopwood, were any thing to turn out wrong, that I may be excused for my anxiety, which I think is natural enough."

"It is time, sir, to express it when you see any thing wrong," said Vernon, sternly; "the bills *will* be taken up."

"I am really ashamed, my dear sir," said the solicitor, with quite his old manner, for he began half to hope, and half to fear, that matters were not so bad with the banker as he had for some time past surmised. "I am really ashamed to have doubted it for a moment. But will you permit me to inquire, whether they are to be presented at the banking-house? I can easily send word to my friend to present them here, if you prefer it."

Vernon hesitated. He had called upon Robinson, with the express intention of raising as much money upon his estate at Egham as would suffice to take up the bills; but now that he saw Robinson before him—now that he felt how completely he should place himself in the power of the solicitor—he could not bring himself to the degradation of requesting any accommodation from him. Robinson perceived his perplexity, and was not far from divining the cause of it.

"You did not hear me, I presume, Mr. Vernon?" said Robinson.

"Oh, yes, yes, I beg pardon; I was thinking of something else. Presented here? Oh, no, by no means, that is not necessary—they have advice of them in Lombard-street. I merely called in passing. You remember what I spoke to you about some time ago, respecting my place at Egham. Will you look out for a purchaser?"

"With great pleasure," said the solicitor, perfectly astounded at the *nonchalance* exhibited by a man whom he had set down as half way gone to the dogs long ago.

"Yes—and Robinson," continued Vernon, who having determined upon not imparting a tittle of his affairs to the

other, as suddenly resolved to draw him completely off the scent—"your bill of cost must be formidable, I suspect; I wish you would cause it to be made out; I should like to pay it."

"Oh, my dear sir!" cried Robinson, in ecstasy; "pray don't mention it. Ever the same, I perceive; the same liberal, considerate Mr. Vernon. But you are not going? Won't you stay awhile?"

"No, I must away," said Vernon; "pray don't rise."

"But I insist," said Robinson, opening the door with great humility. "Will you allow me to say one word? Your friend, Mrs. Maxwell—"

"Has arranged her difficulties for the present, I hear?"

"Yes, sir; but still—"

"I do not wish to hear anything respecting her," said Vernon.

"Enough, I am dumb," cried Robinson; "but still—"

"Nay, I won't hear a word. Good afternoon."

The false spirits Vernon contrived to muster during his interview with the solicitor, deserted him as soon as he found himself in the street; and once more he felt the imminent peril of his situation. "Two resources which had presented themselves to him, he had rejected, and where was he now to turn? and with what hope of extrication? It was more from the force of old associations, than from any design of entering, that he found himself upon the steps of his club. He was not sorry that he had taken this direction. Wine could at all events assuage, if not banish, the remembrance of difficulties upon which he felt he could no longer dwell with safety. He entered the room, and sat himself down, and was soon lost in deep and still unavailing reflection, which, useless as he could not but know it to be, he could not choose but indulge.

He was soon aroused from his reverie by a familiar shake of the shoulder, administered by one whose nerves apparently were in the highest possible perfection.

"Ha! Vernon, my dear fellow, who would have dreamed of seeing you here? The porter told me you never came now."

"My dear Moore," cried Vernon, starting up, and shaking his friend heartily by the hand, "I did not know you were returned to England."

"Oh, yes, some time since. But, why won't you come

home, and dine with me to-day? Mrs. Moore will be delighted to see you."

Vernon accepted the invitation, and the gentlemen in a few minutes departed.

It was not altogether to escape from his own thoughts, that Vernon consented to accompany his friend home. Moore was a man of very good property, and a few years since had married an heiress of great wealth; and the thought suddenly struck Vernon, that even now, at the last moment, Moore had it in his power to extricate him from his present situation. He was perfectly assured of his friendship; and besides, there seemed something providential in this accidental rencontre, which infused new life into him.

It was not till long after Mrs. Moore had retired to the drawing-room, that Vernon was furnished with an opportunity of broaching the subject in which he was so deeply interested; and when an opportunity did occur, an unaccountable sinking of the heart, which almost amounted for the moment to an entire suspension of the faculty of speech, withheld him. It was a considerable period before a second occasion presented itself, of alluding to his private affairs; for Moore was a man gifted with an infinite amount of small talk, and could, indeed, converse upon most topics with all the fluency, if not with all the wisdom, of a philosopher. A second, and a third occasion were lost, until it became late, and the expediency of sticking any longer to the bottle was at least questionable.

"Well," said Moore, at length, "and how gets on the banking business? These have been rather ticklish times of late, with you gentlemen, I hear."

"They have, indeed," answered Vernon; "and we have not fared much better than our neighbors, I can tell you," he added with forced gaiety. "Forty or fifty thousand would be by no means unacceptable at this moment; and we could afford good interest for it, too."

"Indeed!" cried Moore. "Well, I thought you bankers never wanted money. Now, had I required a few thousands—which by the bye, I have wanted most miserably of late—I should have made sure you could let me have it."

Vernon's heart sunk within him when he heard this.

"At any other time," he faltered, "we should of course,



have been happy to serve you ; but now —. Well but you talk of wanting money, Moore ; why, your own property, and Mrs. Moore's fortune —"

"Very good," interrupted Moore "and, thank God, all right yet. But, Vernon, my boy, you don't know what I lost last season at Frascati's ;" and he significantly shook his elbow. "A word to the wise, eh?"

"Oh ! I see," replied Vernon, with a painful smile.

It now occurred to the banker, to make Moore his confidant, and to lay before him unreservedly the real situation of his affairs, to crave his advice, and to implore his assistance. The thought no sooner entered his mind, than it arose to his lips ; but his courage deserted him the moment he was about to speak ; a cold sweat overspread his forehead ; and, as the secret forced itself back upon his heart, a faintness pervaded his frame—a dizziness swam before his eyes, and he was about to fall from his chair.

"Good God ! my dear fellow," cried Moore, alarmed beyond measure, "what's the matter ? You look monstrously pale ; has the wine disagreed with you ?"

"No, no, I am better now," said Vernon, passing his hand across his forehead ; "I am subject to these attacks. I will go home now ; the air will do me good."

"Take care of yourself, that's all," said Moore—"Won't you take coffee before you go?"

"Thank you, no," said Vernon, anxious to get away. "I shall see you again shortly. God bless you, Moore."

"And you, my dear fellow. I am always at home, or at the club."

Vernon walked a few paces and stopped. He gazed before him for a time vaguely. "Oh, my God !" he exclaimed, striking his forehead violently, "what weakness is this which overcomes me at the moment I have most need of self-possession ? what can it be ? Is it a curse upon me for my villany ? It is—it is—and I have brought it upon myself. But wherefore should I call it a curse ?" he added, as he proceeded rapidly down the street ; "it is the blessed interference of the Almighty, who will no longer permit me to draw misery and ruin upon the heads of others. I have made my own fate, and I *must* abide the consequences !"

## CHAPTER XI.

“So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,  
Farewell remorse ; all good to me is lost.”

VERNON gazed around him. He was in Leicester-square. “I cannot go home to-night,” he muttered to himself, “and, whatever the issue, I will show myself in Lombard-street to-morrow.”

This sudden resolution, so emphatically pronounced, relieved his mind in a great measure of the present weight which oppressed it. He walked with a firmer and more deliberate step, and, entering the coffee-room of the Hummums, desired a bed to be prepared for him.

It was not until a very late hour, and after having swallowed several tumblers of brandy and water, that he proceeded to his chamber ; where, casting himself upon the bed, he was soon in a profound slumber, from which he did not awake till noon on the following day.

He arose hastily, and descended to the coffee-room, and approaching the glass, surveyed himself for a considerable time. “There is nothing in this face that betrays weakness—my nerves all right, yes—I shall do now, I shall do now: he shall not triumph over me, at all events ;—yes—I will see him,” he added ; “the worst is past, and it is time this hell of torture should end.”

It was not long ere he reached Lombard-street. He did not for a moment slacken his pace ; but passing straight through the shop, entered abruptly the private office of his partner.

Warkworth, with his friend Mr. Graham, was standing facing the door, as Vernon approached, prepared, and as it seemed, in expectation of his arrival. Warkworth was pale, and the quiver of his lip betrayed the agitation which

he could not control. Mr. Graham made a stiff and formal bow, which Vernon as coldly returned.

"Will you be seated?" said Warkworth, and he was about to hand a chair.

"Allow me," said Graham; "your hand trembles, Mr. Warkworth."

"I am getting old," said Warkworth tremulously.

"I would rather stand," said Vernon, in a hollow voice.

"Well, Mr. Vernon," said Warkworth with suppressed emotion, "Mr. Hopwood's bills have been presented, and are paid."

He paused; but receiving no answer continued, "I will not deceive you, Vernon; I heard of these bills two months ago—by chance—and I am glad of it, for I have been prepared for them. I must also tell you, that Sewell has recalled the money he entrusted to us, and that it has been returned."

Here Vernon groaned, and covering his face with his hands, sunk into a chair.

"Do not think," continued Warkworth, "that our friend Graham—for he is your friend as well as mine—is come here to be a witness of your——" he paused, "your misfortunes, my dear Vernon; what transpires this day, will never pass his lips."

"On my sacred word as a man—no," said Graham solemnly; "my dear sir, make yourself easy upon that score."

"But it is time we should come to an understanding," continued Warkworth. "My calculation, then is, that you have withdrawn your share of the capital of the house, and it is advisable we should dissolve partnership."

Vernon looked up vaguely.

"What think you, Mr. Graham?" inquired Warkworth.

"Decidedly!"

"But I do not wish that you should be left without means," continued Warkworth; "it were not right you should be. You have, in one sense, an hereditary interest in this house. I propose, then, to settle upon your two sisters jointly 1,000*l.* a-year, and the same sum upon yourself. Is it fair?—when at your leisure you examine the books, I think you will find it so."

Vernon had been sitting in a state of stupefaction during this speech—his eyes fixed immoveably upon the

ground. He did not alter his position—not a limb moved—not a breath seemed to proceed from his body.

“Let Mr. Graham retire for a few minutes—I wish it—” said Vernon in an almost inaudible tone.

Warkworth motioned to his friend, who retired into an inner room. Vernon arose suddenly, and advancing towards his partner, caught him by the hand, and wrung it in silence. “Warkworth,” he gasped, at length, “this kindness, which I did not expect—this generosity, which I had no right to look for, which I do not deserve—overwhelm—unman me. Could I shed tears—but I cannot—you would see—you would feel—that I had still some honor—some shame, remaining in me. Can I make any reparation? say that I can—let me still be your partner—the business shall be yours—let me still remain—I will devote my life to you, Warkworth.”

“Impossible!” exclaimed the old man, returning the pressure of his partner’s hand, “impossible—it must not be,” and he averted his head, and wept like a child.

“I obey—I submit,” said Vernon; “indeed, I had no right to expect it. But let not the partnership be dissolved now—not at this moment.”

“That must not be,” cried Warkworth; “it might excite suspicion. A month, or even two, will be time enough.”

“I thank you; and I am grateful for your kindness;” said Vernon half wildly. “I have no further business in this house, and I will go.”

“You must not leave us yet,” said Warkworth kindly, taking him by the arm, “where would you go? Compose yourself and remain here to-day.”

“That I could not do, for the world’s wealth,” said Vernon, shaking his head; “I shall find a place to go to—I dare say.—Home! Yes, I have a home, all to myself!”

“Come, come—be more calm—collect yourself; you are not in a situation to go any where at this moment.”

“Oh yes, I am.” He placed his hand to his forehead. “I am not quite right *here* just now, Warkworth; but I shall be better soon. Dissipation has done this—it destroys a man at last, Warkworth. I will think of what you have said, by and bye. Nay, nay, I am quite well again. The weight is removed from my brain. Make

my apology to Graham. I could not speak to him at present."

It was with certain misgivings which, however, he dared not express, that Warkworth permitted Vernon to leave the banking-house. He watched him from the door till he was out of sight, and then, with a sigh, returned to his friend. The consciousness that he had performed a most unpleasant duty, with honor, and the conviction he felt that every thing would in future be conducted under his own eye, and that Vernon had no longer the power to compromise, or endanger the reputation of the house, tended considerably to elevate his spirits, and in earnest conversation with Graham he soon forgot the state in which his partner had left him.

The condition of mind in which Vernon quitted the house, could Warkworth have comprehended the existence of such feeling, might well have justified his misgivings respecting him. To the first emotions excited by Warkworth's generosity towards him, succeeded a sense of shame, of mortification, and of despair, which at one moment brought the whole ignominy of his situation clearly before him, and at the next threw his mind into utter darkness and confusion. Whither should he fly? Where conceal himself from the scorn—or from the ridicule, which is worse than scorn—of mankind? Everybody as he passed appeared to his disturbed fancy to be gazing upon him—to be looking into his very soul, and to be reading there the history of his debasement—of his degradation!

He stopped suddenly, and hastened up a gateway.

"Whither am I going?" he murmured, wildly. "Home—yes; nobody there can know any thing of this? And what if they could? these things have happened before. I am not the first scoundrel that ever lived in England, and died abroad! Aye, I will go abroad. Yes, I shall escape them there, and find good company to keep me in countenance."

A servant hurried to the gate, as Vernon alighted from his horse.

"You have been riding hard, sir," said the man, taking his reins.

Vernon stared at him for a moment—"What—riding hard? Yes, it is good for me; it does me good, Thomas."

"Well," he said to the porter, who stood with the

door open, gazing at his master in astonishment, "has any body called since I left?"

"Only Captain Laurence, sir," said the man, following him into the parlor.

"Curse him!" he muttered, in an inaudible tone; "you delivered him my message, of course?"

"What message, sir?" stammered the man.

"Fool!" said Vernon; "did I not order you to inform him, that if he had any communication to make to me, it must be made by letter—that I would not see him?"

"You did, sir; but before I could deliver the message, the captain entered the house, saying that he wanted particularly to see you, and that he would wait your return."

"Where is he now, then? when did he go? is he gone?" inquired Vernon, hastily.

"He is here still," said the man, hesitating; "in the library, I believe."

"You have not obeyed my orders, Dixon," said the banker. "It is of little consequence. You must look out for another situation; I hope it will be a better one than the present."

"I am extremely sorry, sir," said the man, grieved; "I really did not mean —"

"Nay, I am not offended now," said Vernon, turning upon his heel; "I should be compelled to part with you in a month or two. Leave the room."

The man retired, perplexed in the extreme, and calling together a general meeting of the servants of the house, tapped his forehead significantly, and "hoped master was all right in the upper story."

In about half an hour the footman knocked with considerable diffidence at the parlor door.

"What now? what do you want?" said Vernon, starting from the sofa, as the man entered the room.

"Captain Laurence desired me to say, sir, that he is very anxious to see you for a few minutes."

"Tell Captain Laurence that I can't—that I won't see him. Remind him that I have already written to him to that effect. What is the fool staring at? Begone."

"And yet," resumed Vernon, when the footman had closed the door; "why not see the man at once, and tell him plainly and calmly that our acquaintance must henceforth cease—that the connection must be broken off."

He rang the bell violently. "You may tell Captain

Laurence that I will see him," he said to the astonished servant; "I am at his service as soon as he pleases."

When Laurence entered at the further end of the room, Vernon was standing, in one of those constrained attitudes which men, endeavoring to appear calm and quite at their ease, contrive invariably to assume.

"Will you take a seat, Captain Laurence," said the banker, with a stiff bow.

Laurence sat down, and placing his hat upon the table, gazed at Vernon in surprise for a few moments.

"My dear fellow," said he at length, "what is the meaning of this strange conduct? Here have you been, during the last three months, acting the most extraordinary part I ever witnessed in my life. I never was more astonished—more surprised."

"With less occasion to be so, I dare say?" interrogated Vernon. "I am glad," he added, with bitterness, "I am able to create any sensation, now-a-days—even one of surprise."

"Well, but—" said Laurence, impatiently—"I can't understand this, upon my life, Vernon. Why do you treat me thus? Have I inadvertently offended you? if so, I am really much concerned."

"No doubt of it," said Vernon.

"Well, then," continued Laurence, "can't you explain this mystery? Some skulking scoundrel has been calumniating me—has been abusing your credulity with falsehoods against me."

"No;" cried the banker, doggedly.

"You have then misconceived some part of my conduct?"

"I have *misconceived* nothing, Captain Laurence."

"Mr. Vernon," said Laurence, sternly, surveying the other with a determined look; "your conduct is neither straightforward, nor, permit me to say, manly."

"You say so, do you?" said Vernon, fiercely springing to his feet.

"Hear me," continued Laurence; "I should have resented your treatment of me long ago; but that—"

"You thought better of it, I presume," said Vernon, with a sneer.

"I will not quarrel with you," said Laurence; "and I am sorry I said so much a moment ago. I see you are excited, and I pass over your insinuations. I was given

to understand by your sister that you were very much harassed a month or two since by a multiplicity of business, and—"

"Took, therefore," interrupted Vernon, "that opportunity of importuning me about business of your own."

"Not so—not so," said Laurence; "how can you call it by that name? It was your mother's earnest and last request, Vernon—it is your sister Mary's wish—it shall be the study of my life to make Charlotte happy."

"Oh!—I see—I see;—I know it all," exclaimed Vernon, in a tone of disgust. He paused for some minutes, and continued, more calmly, "My sister told you truly, Captain Laurence, that, for some months past, I have been very much harassed by business of a very important and serious character. At that period I withheld my consent to the marriage of my sister with you. Now, sir, without acquainting you with the precise nature of that business, I may tell you, that it has *now* assumed an aspect which utterly precludes the possibility of your fulfilling that contract. I do you, therefore, a kindness and a service by releasing you."

"How so?" said Laurence, in amaze. "My dear Vernon, explain;—or, if not so, furnish me with some slight intimation of the cause of so extraordinary a determination on your part:—for—pardon me—I cannot think it any thing else."

"You may think as you please, sir," said Vernon, coldly, who imagined he could perceive, in the manner of Laurence, a perfect knowledge of recent events, and mistook his calmness for suppressed pleasure, that the proposition to break off the match emanated from himself. "I neither can nor will explain any thing. Time is a sure hand at these matters—he will explain all, and quite soon enough."

"Then permit me to say," cried Laurence, rising, "that I no longer look to you for a definitive answer to my application. I feel I have too long degraded myself by referring to you."

"Then to whom, Captain Laurence, do you propose to apply?" said Vernon; "I presume I may inquire."

"To your sisters, sir," said Laurence, deeply mortified; "and if they are disposed to concur in your unreasonable opposition, I can have nothing further to say:—but not



until I hear as much from their own lips, will I—or, indeed, ought I—to relinquish my claims.”

“As you please,” said Vernon, with an air of indifference. “I presume you know where to find them?”

“I do; and have already waited upon them several times at Brighton.”

“Aye, indeed—have you?” said Vernon. “That must cease, Captain Laurence—that must not be, sir;—it must be put an end to.—I am master of my own family, and will remain so. Good evening, sir.”

“I wish you were master of yourself, Vernon,” said Laurence, walking to the door; “but I will say no more. I presume our acquaintance is at an end?”

“Quite so—at least for the present.” And having bowed Captain Laurence from the apartment with punctilious formality, he retired to his own room.

## CHAPTER XII.

“—————To exult

E'en o'er an enemy oppress'd, and heap  
Affliction on the afflicted, is the mark,  
And the mean triumph of a dastard soul.”

It is a remark which, although it has not the charm of novelty to recommend it, is, at least, not yet worn quite threadbare—that evils assume a more formidable aspect when seen from a distance, than when they immediately confront us. Shakspeare has indeed said —

“Between the acting of a dreadful thing,  
And its completion, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream.”

And this, doubtless, is true; but when we are to be acted upon by circumstances which we cannot evade or escape—when some inevitable calamity approaches, for which we are permitted time to prepare—the mind insensibly, and of necessity, conforms itself to it; and the nearer it approaches—immediately it becomes, as it were, palpable—its real dimensions are known, and the exhalations which surrounded and magnified it are dispersed.

Six weeks had barely elapsed since Vernon had acceded to the proposition of Warkworth, before it was generally known that the former was no longer a partner in the banking-house—that he had retired altogether from business—and that all experiments upon his credulity, his generosity or his weakness, must henceforth be abandoned, or be conducted on a much more limited scale than formerly.

As is commonly the case upon such occasions, the

state of matters with Vernon had been suspected long before, and had been so generally whispered about and commented upon, that when the dissolution of partnership appeared in the Gazette, it could hardly be called news. When all was over, Vernon experienced a relief, a comparative lightness of spirits, which he had not for many years enjoyed. His career of duplicity, of embarrassment, of almost inextricable involvement, was at an end. If he had not much to hope for in the future, he had at least nothing to fear; and even now he should be in a situation to do partial justice to his sisters—to satisfy all demands upon him—and to retain sufficient to support himself like a gentleman.

And then the world, which is bad enough, heaven knows, is, nevertheless, a world that studies to save appearances. It will not do—it is not the thing—to cut a man the instant he loses *caste* in society—at the very moment he ceases to be respectable in the scale, as one of weight and substance. A bow, and a squeeze of the hand ~~at~~ parting, are good manners, at all events; and these fell to the share of Vernon. But by none was so much clamorous sympathy manifested, as by those who had either never been ambitious of rising in the world, or who had never been blest with the power of doing so, and who were secretly delighted to behold one of the “great ones of the city” reduced to their own level. But that which acted most acutely upon Vernon’s feelings was the anxiety and concern evinced by his sisters. He knew that he deserved their reproaches, and perhaps could have been better able to withstand them; but their tenderness and solicitude, whilst it disturbed, unmanned him. A rebuke was conveyed in every word of affection that fell from their lips; and it wounded him the more deeply, because it was undesigned. It acted as a counterbalance to these feelings, that at this time he had, or thought he had, reason to be offended with them. He had peremptorily enjoined his elder sister to discourage any further intimacy or acquaintance with Captain Laurence;—a command which his sister plainly intimated to him it was not her intention to obey. He, however, laid a lighter stress upon the injunction than he was wont to exercise in matters that concerned the maintenance of his own authority; since he was secretly of opinion that Laurence, when he came to the knowledge of his

(Vernon's) altered position in the world, would voluntarily discontinue his visits. One circumstance shortly after appeared strongly to favor this supposition; for Laurence, almost as soon as the situation of Vernon became a matter of suspicion, on the plea of urgent business, had retired to Leicestershire, and had not since returned.

It cannot appear strange to the reader, who, by this time, doubtless, pretty well understands the character of Vernon, that he was as much disgusted with Laurence for taking him, as he imagined, at his word, as he had before been enraged at his obstinate disregard of it. What seemed to be the cold-blooded, mercenary character of the man, was now clearly displayed to him; and he determined, if possible, at any personal sacrifice, to make up the entire sum he was indebted to his sisters. He anticipated with delight the bitter mortification of Laurence, when he discovered that his intended victim, whom he heartlessly abandoned, occupied the same position, in respect of pecuniary means, as heretofore; and that the prize he had once sought to gain was still a prize, but one of which he could no longer hope to be permitted to possess himself.

It was partly with a view of achieving this object, that Vernon gave directions to Messrs. Mottram and Sniggles to advertise the sale of his estate at Egham—a business which these gentlemen immediately took in hand with an alacrity indicative of no slight degree of pleasure, in being called upon to perform so important an operation. In point of fact, Messrs. Mottram and Sniggles had long been striving to put forth that branch from the parent stem—the surveying profession—but hitherto the slender offshoot had not flourished. Now, however, the whole country would soon be apprised that they (Messrs. M. and S.) were, indeed, house and land agents on a large scale;—and now it was for Mr. Mottram to show that he possessed talents for the pulpit, of which the parlor frequenters of the King's Head had unfairly and unkindly suspected him to be deficient. That delight, however, which enlarged minds invariably feel when an opportunity presents itself of vindicating their claims to due consideration and respect, is very frequently a delight that abhors and shuns an outward manifestation of itself.

Mr. Mottram doubtless felt, that, sooner or later, his

time must come; that genius, like murder, will out; that talents are seldom hidden for life under a bushel; and he comported himself with so much calmness and modesty, during the interval between the first advertisement and the day of sale, that none but the most minute and subtle observers could have detected the slightest alteration in his manners and general appearance.

Not so, Mr. Sniggles; to whom, to feel any degree of pleasure, and not to communicate it to all the specimens of the habitable world that fell in his way, was a physical impossibility. Mr. Sniggles during the last fortnight had occupied himself in going over—in looking over—in looking at—and in thinking about—the property for sale. He had busied himself in the counting-house, in folding and placing in parcels of equal size a pile of printed forms, stating the conditions of sale, and all the particulars relating to the estate; with the names printed on the back, of the parties empowered to carry it into effect. He had given away, as they were applied for, “lots,” as he expressed himself, of these documents, and every evening he was to be seen parading the neighborhood with one outspread in his hand, talking to his friends about the “splendid property”—“fine estate”—“capital investment”—“nice spot”—and the like.

Upon Mr. Sniggles devolved the duty, on the morning of sale, of arranging the situation of the rostrum in the assembly room of the King's Head, for his partner's reception, and of seeing that immense bills were posted upon the wooden pillars of the portico, and hung from every window in the house. This done, immediately the company began to arrive, Mr. Sniggles placed a pen behind his ear, whispered his partner at short intervals—nodded to one person—chattered with another—and then came down stairs, and up stairs, and down again—and into the coffee-room—and out of the coffee-room into the bar—and out of the bar into the coffee-room—and overturned one gentleman, and apologised to another—and hurried to the door step, and looked all ways at once, so that it might be imagined that the little man had just sold his own soul, by auction, to Old Nick, whom he expected every moment to come and “clear” his purchase.

It cannot be wondered at, that an event like this caused no slight sensation in the neighborhood; and that some time before the hour appointed for the commencement of

the sale, the assembly-room of the King's Head was nearly-filled with company. - Amongst others, Mr. Robinson was in attendance, and was engaged in busy and almost exclusive communion with Mr. Mottram at a side-table. Mr. Hopwood was likewise present, with an intention of bidding for the property, if there was any chance of getting it at a low figure—it would do so admirably for a marriage present for Georgina. Nor could Mr. Clarendieux satisfy himself as to the propriety of being absent upon an occasion like the present. Occupying a conspicuous situation at a large table in the middle of the room, he sat perusing and re-perusing the printed paper which Sniggles, when he entered, slid into his hand; but there was reason to fear, from the expression of his aristocratic features, which ever and anon, as he elevated his head to scan the momentarily increasing company, assumed an air of perfect indifference, that it would be hardly worth his while to become the owner of the estate. Indeed, he had informed Mrs. M'Farlam, the baker's wife, of whose house he occupied the first floor furnished, that he had no intention of bidding for the property. By the side of this gentleman sat his friend, Mr. Grayling, who had contrived to carry himself up stairs, and whose sole object in coming was to while his tedious leisure till dinner-time, and who had given orders to his indispensable attendant, the boy, to come at two o'clock, and assist him in the removal of himself to his own house.

In one corner of the room, apart from the rest, stood two worthy people in deep and confidential talk:—Mr. Jabez Hunsman, who had been despatched thither by Mrs. Maxwell, for the purpose of watching the proceedings, and of duly reporting progress when they were concluded; and Mr. Jeffries, who had accompanied his friend and master, Mr. Robinson, partly to indicate by his presence the importance of the latter, and partly because Mr. Robinson expected a certain client to call upon him that morning, whom he had no particular wish that Mr. Jeffries should encounter in his absence.

"Why, Jack," said Hunsman, addressing his friend, "this is a queer start, arn't it—this break down of the banker? I should have thought the linch-pins had been all right there, whatever others may be."

"It is so, Mr. Hunsman," answered Jeffries, with a somewhat dignified air, "and we thought for a long time

that all *was* right. He owes us a considerable sum: we have been grossly deceived in him."

"And who the devil are *we?*" and what do you mean by *us?*" asked Mr. Hunsman, in surprise.

"Why, Mr. Robinson and myself, to be sure," said Mr. Jeffries. "I say, we have reason to complain of Mr. Vernon's want of candor towards us."

Here the inconsiderate Jabez Hunsman gave vent to an unseemly burst of laughter, which caused the vivacious eye of the ever-active Sniggles to rest upon him with a baleful expression.

"Why, Jack Jeffries," cried Hunsman, moderating his tone, "you're a precious humbug, I don't think! What! such a hunted devil as you draw yourself up alongside Robinson? It's not acting consistent, Jack: I told you my mind the other day, at the office."

"What do you mean, Mr. Jabez Hunsman?" replied Jeffries. "If I have been unfortunate, *you* know very well that I shan't remain so long. Mr. Robinson has been a good friend to me, and, so far as my duty to my family will permit me, I am determined to prove grateful for it. Why, one can't go on for ever in the loose way we used to conduct ourselves, Hunsman. The duty I owe to my wife and family, as I remarked—that sacred duty which ought to take precedence—"

"Come down, will you, out of them blessed flights," interrupted Hunsman; "blow me, if it don't make me ill to listen to you. It's just the way Betsy rigs me sometimes. Duty to wife and family! all a hum, and no mistake. She learned that story of old Griddle, who used the Three Crowns, some years back. Why, you must remember the old fellow, Jack—transported for bigamy, you know."

"Yes, I think I recollect," said Jeffries, whose reserve, under the influence of his former companion, was always sure to melt away; "I recollect Griddle very well; wasn't he "

"Pulled up," said Hunsman, quickly, "for beating his wife with a crow-bar, and keeping his eldest boy in the coal-cellar, for three weeks, with a chain around his body, and no grub in it. A precious article he was."

"Such a monster deserved to die on the gibbet!" said Jeffries, with an appropriate expression of moral warmth.

"Aye, sure," cried Hunsman, "although he *was* always

going on about the 'duty he owed to his wife and family.' But, I say, Jack, isn't it a bad case of the banker? Such a nob as he used to be! such a slap-up swell! and, mind you, quite the gentleman with it—I believe you—no mistake there."

"He *was* very much of the gentleman," acquiesced Jeffries.

"Warn't he then?" resumed the other. "I'll tell you what, Jack, if it hadn't been for her ladyship up yonder—you know who I mean—Mrs. M——, the banker might have held up his head with the best on 'em to this day."

"Oh, no," said Jeffries, "I don't think that; there were other causes."

"That woman doubled him up, I tell you," returned Hunsman, doggedly; "why, she could do anything with him at one time, she could. The sight of tin she's hounded him out of! it's enough to make one's hair stand on end. At one time he could deny her nothing she set her heart—no, I'm blessed if she's much of that—nothing she set her mind upon."

"That was decidedly foolish," remarked Jeffries.

"Oh, he was soft, Jack; precious green, and that's all about it. But mark me, I've a notion the smash will soon turn up yonder," and Hunsman winked his eye.

"What! sooner than we expected?" inquired Jeffries.

"Don't shout quite so loud, that's a good man," suggested Jabez; "we don't want all the room to be as wise as ourselves. Yes, I'll tell you more about it to-night."

"How do you know?" said Jeffries, interested.

"Never you mind that *now*; I'm not a Catholic; I'm not obliged to confess; and, if I was, you are not the pope o' Rome, Jack. But there'll be a wind-up—that's coming to the pint. Why, lord love you! it would have done your eyes good to see the gentry that used to come down. None of your half-and-half rubbish, but the real thing—tip-top swells. The larks they had!—the shindies they kicked up! But my lady has seen their backs for the last time, I'm thinking. They've mizzled, Jack—mizzled. But I've told you all afore."

"That's a bad job, I'm afraid, for the lady," remarked Jeffries.

"Well, it isn't over and above pleasant, I can tell you," said the communicative Jabez. "But, Jack, you should see the visitors that call upon her now, a trifle too often,



I fancy; coves that won't take 'call again!' for an answer; fellows that have long bills, and have got a receipt-stamp in their pockets, which they want to fill up, but mustn't. You should see the long faces they pull, as they toddle down the steps; about as long as their bills, and no mistake."

"Oh, it has come to that, has it?" said Jeffries. "Then good-bye to Mrs. Maxwell for the present."

"What a right down severe plant that was," remarked Hunsman, lowering his voice to a whisper, "your governor wanted to make upon the banker a few months back."

"What was that? I never heard of it," said Jeffries.

"Oh, it was before you went to the old scamp again, I fancy. He put a sham dstraint into the house, and then inveigled Vernon to call, and then wanted to gammon him to sign a bond for the amount, and he'd get the matter settled, he said—and he d—to him. But it was no go; the banker was down upon him, for once; he wouldn't put his fist to it, and left my lady and old barnacles in a bit of a huff. My eyes and limbs! the rumpus that came off after he left, between them two innocents. At it they went, tooth and nail, hammer and tongs; blest if it wasn't as good as a play, till the lady showed him the door, and was going to call me to trundle him out."

"I'll tell you what," said Jeffries, with the familiarity of former times, and in a confidential key, "that governor of mine is the precioussest old scamp that ever *wasn't* taken up; you don't know the artful dodges he's up to."

"I can pretty well guess though," said Hunsman. "That wasn't a bad start the other day."

"Well, if I had Robinson's abilities," resumed the other, "do you think I'd be as I am now? I'd ride in my carriage before long."

"Then I can recommend you a coachman," said Hunsman; "of all the sights you ever clapt eyes on, you never see anything like old Maxwell, at this present writing. The old humbug knows there's a screw loose, and begins to quake; he is always in the cellar, swigging away at the barrel of ale, and when he has made himself precious lushy, my gentleman toddles into the kitchen, and cries like a babby; I tell him if he grizzles so, he'll turn his very wig gray; and he says he don't care how soon he does. Would'nt he like to get a good berth in a snug family

again? He would'nt mind seeing himself on the top of a hammer-cloth, if that's all; but I suppose the lady would think that *in for a dig*, as they call it."

Jeffries was about to make a reply to this speech; but was prevented by a sudden sensation, followed by a deep silence that pervaded the room. Mr. Mottram was about to mount the pulpit; a movement from which he was delayed by some whispering from Mr. Robinson, and a private communication on the part of Mr. Hopwood.

"I say, Jack," said Hunsman; "suppose we go below for a few minutes, and take a glass together. Mottram will be at it for half-an-hour, at least, and we had better consult on what we talked on the other day."

"I might be wanted," suggested Jeffries.

"What! is Robinson going to take his chance with the rest?" said Hunsman.

"Yes; he has come down for the express purpose of buying the estate, if possible."

"Oh! then he must want *you*, I don't think; make yourself easy about that; come, I've got a sight to tell you about Bouverie."

"Well, I don't mind, for a few minutes," and the two friends retired, to take a little necessary refreshment, and discuss their affairs.

And now, Mr. Mottram, with a slight feeling of nervousness, proper to the occasion, climbed into the pulpit, and fortified by a glass of rum and milk, furnished by his attentive partner, who whispered in his ear, that it was always done at the auction mart, began to hold forth in eloquent but appropriate terms, upon the singular, and indeed exclusive merits of the property he had the honor and the happiness to offer for public sale. The desirableness of the purchase—how indispensable, how incumbent a duty it was upon every one in the room, to make himself immediately possessed of it—were duly set forth, and enlarged upon. But why should we offer a minute description of that, which the reader may at any time witness, performed by a greater master even than Mr. Mottram—even by that nabob of auctioneers, Mr. George Robins, from whom Mottram had in truth derived his inspiration, having gone to London upon three several occasions, for the special purpose of taking gratuitous lessons from that unrivalled artist. Suffice it to say, that the estate fetched a much higher price than the majority of

the room anticipated; that Mr. Hopwood nodded his head till he got a crick in the neck, and gave up the pursuit in despair; that Mr. Clarencieux dotted down the biddings, till the lead of his pencil broke; that Mr. Grayling was observed to open his eyes twice, very much wider than usual; and that finally, Mr. Robinson was declared the purchaser, and congratulated thereupon, by Messrs. Mottram and Sniggles, respectively. The company having, at the conclusion of the sale, departed, Mr. Robinson gave to Mr. Mottram the name of his principal, for he was but an agent in the matter, and arranged to pay over the purchase money on the following day. These necessary points having been satisfactorily settled, Mr. Robinson, accompanied by Mr. Sniggles, whose duty it was to inform Vernon of the result of the sale, entered the Egham stage; Mr. Jeffries, slightly fuddled, managed to get on the box; and in due time the party was set down at the Golden Cross, Charing Cross; Mr. Robinson and his assistant betaking themselves to the office of the former, and Mr. Sniggles making the best of his way to Jermyn-street, where Vernon had for some time past occupied a suite of apartments.

Mr. Sniggles being ushered into the drawing-room, presented himself, with his usual volatile grace, before Vernon, who was seated in his dressing-gown and slippers, with a bottle of wine before him. "Ah! Sniggles," cried Vernon; "I'm glad to see you; I half expected you, but not so soon. You are a man of business, Sniggles," and he rang the bell for fresh glasses.

"Business must be attended to," said Sniggles, rubbing his hands, "and I am happy to say I think you will not be dissatisfied with our proceedings to-day."

"This little matter is settled, then, I presume?" said Vernon. "Did the sale go off well? Pray who is the fortunate man?"

"The sale went off wonderfully well, sir," cried Sniggles; "at least every one thought so. The fortunate man, as you justly term him, is your friend—I believe I may say so—Mr. Robinson, solicitor, of this city."

"Pish!" exclaimed Vernon, suddenly drawing himself up in his chair.

Mr. Sniggles was slightly annoyed at this outbreak.

"Did you speak, Mr. Vernon?" he at length thought it the best thing he could do to inquire.

"No,—no—no;" said Vernon recollecting himself "I beg your pardon, it was nothing. Fill your glass, I beg of you."

Mr. Sniggles obeyed; and taking off a bumper, produced his pocket book, from which he drew a paper upon which he gazed for a moment with a smile of satisfaction.

"Here, sir," said he, handing the paper to Vernon, "here is the sum we obtained for the property—the amount I mean; we touch the ready to-morrow."

"Come, this will do," cried Vernon, "this is much beyond my expectations; I think I may consider myself fortunate—what think you, Sniggles? I hope Mr. Robinson will pay the amount of the purchase-money into your own hands to-morrow without fail. Every thing is straight-forward and satisfactory?"

"Quite so—perfectly so," cried Sniggles; "by the bye, Mr. Robinson is not the *bona fide* purchaser—I forgot to mention that—in fact, he is merely the agent in the business."

Vernon was considerably surprised—who could possibly have employed Robinson in this business? His thoughts instantly recurred to Lord Walgrave or Mr. Hopwood.

"Lord Walgrave, perhaps?" he inquired.

"No, Mr. Vernon, no," said Sniggles, smiling mysteriously?"

"Mr. Hopwood then?"

"Still wide of the mark," cried Sniggles, swallowing another glass: "Lord bless you—Hopwood? no; he's too shy a cock to trust any one but himself, and that he won't always do."

"Mr. Hopwood," said Vernon gravely, "may be a shy cock, as you call him, for ought I know or care; but really Mr. Sniggles, it strikes me, that at this moment you yourself are ambitious of showing yourself a bird of the same feather. Pray, sir, be so kind as to let me know at once who is the purchaser of this property?"

"Why, sir," cried Sniggles slightly abashed, "he is a gentleman whose name, until to-day, I never had the pleasure of hearing—Captain Laurence."

Vernon was sipping his wine at the moment the name was announced to him. Great was the astonishment—not to call it consternation—of Sniggles, when Vernon,

with a bitter imprecation, dashed his wine cup into the grate, and began to pace the room with hurried strides.

Little Mr. Sniggles arose in no ordinary fluster. "What is the matter, Mr. Vernon?" said he, "are you unwell—ill—indisposed?"

"Yes—yes—leave me now, Mr. Sniggles—I am subject to these fits."

Mr. Sniggles was too glad to possess himself of his hat for that purpose. "The cash shall be forwarded to you to-morrow—certain," said he.

"Thank you, thank you; much obliged for your kindness and attention to my interests.—Good morning."

The astounded moiety of the respectable firm of Mottram and Sniggles was by no means slow to take advantage of the hint conveyed to him, that he was at liberty to retire, which he accordingly did without any troublesome formality.

"D— him! d— him!" exclaimed Vernon, in the bitterness of his heart, as the door closed on the auctioneer; "this is the basest insult of all. What will Moore say to this? He won't surely, tell me now that I have mistaken him!"

## CHAPTER XIII.

"Mine honor is my life; both grow in one;  
Take honor from me, and my life is done."

It is commonly believed and asserted that adversity is the test of friendship, and that there are very few who can stand so rigorous a test. It is undeniably true, that our misfortunes supply the best criterion by which to ascertain the stability of our friends; but it is by no means so certain that they fall short to the extent which is popularly—we must add, morbidly—supposed. It must be recollected, that, to bear adversity with dignity is no easy task; and that men in perplexed circumstances are too prone to sink into abject abasement on the one hand, or to expect unreasonable and extravagant sympathy and assistance on the other. So that, if there be any perceptible change of conduct or behavior in our friends, it has been in all probability caused by ourselves, who, in nine cases out of ten, afford in our own persons the first example of change.

It will be conceded, at the same time, that there are very few, however well disposed towards the fulfilment of the obligations of friendship, who are competent to the difficult task of helping a man through, and out of, his difficulties. The will is not so rare as that species of humanity which is the offspring jointly of fine feeling and of good taste. The former is the gift of many; there is scarce one who succeeds in acquiring the latter.

Perhaps, in Vernon's state of mind, as indicated in the last chapter, there could not be a more unfortunate adviser and confidant than Moore, who came to visit him shortly after the departure of Mr. Sniggles.

We have, at an earlier period of our history, attributed

to Mr. Moore the possession of many estimable qualities; but much deference for the opinion of others, or tolerance for the caprice of feelings which he could not understand, or would not enter into, were certainly not among them. Moore was a man who would have his own way, and, accordingly, could not think of permitting other people to have theirs; and, unhappily, he was not seldom determined to a course of action, or a line of argument, merely because he perceived another taking a different one. It was still more unfortunate that the self-inflicted misfortunes of Vernon had imbued him with a similar obstinacy of purpose; and, consequently, they had not talked long together, before Vernon became half-disgusted with the self-sufficiency of his friend, and Moore inwardly concluded that there was no doing any thing with so pig-headed a fellow as Vernon.

"Well," said Moore, "patience, my friend; a little while longer, and you'll see yourself at the end of your perplexities. Have you heard anything from Egham, yet? how goes the estate there, I wonder?"

"Sold," said Vernon, drily.

"Sold, is it?" said Moore: "that's well. • Did it fetch a good price? go off well, eh?"

"So far as mere money is concerned," answered Vernon, "it went off, as you call it, very well."

"*Mere* money!" retorted Moore; "what, in Heaven's name, did you sell it for, except for *mere* money, I should be glad to be told? I wish I had rather more of that same mere money;" and he repeated the phrase with sundry varieties of accent. "But what the deuce are you making those wry faces at? if it had been knocked down for *nil*, you'd have been overjoyed, I suppose?"

"You are pleased to be jocose, Moore," said Vernon, coldly; "I am sorry I cannot participate in your mirth. The price, I tell you, was a good one—very good; but the purchaser, Moore—the man—the scoundrel!"

"What of him!" cried Moore. "Who cares a *sous* what the purchaser is? Let him turn the house and grounds into a lunatic establishment, if he pleases; what is that to you? I could recommend him a patient, I believe. Why, you must be mad, Vernon, to brood over such stuff; The man! the scoundrel! His money, I dare say, has virtue in it, if he has none. Who is he?"

"Laurence!" said Vernon, in a low whisper, leaning over the table.

"Laurence!" cried Moore, in astonishment.

"Yes, Laurence! I told you what he was; you have long known my opinion of the man; you have long combated that opinion. You must agree with me at last; this act proves him—displays him in his true colors—a base, low-minded villain!"

"Upon my life, my good friend," answered Moore, coolly, "I really can't see that. He wanted the place—he has bought it; in Heaven's name, let him keep it. Has he paid the money?"

"Pshaw!" cried Vernon, contemptuously.

"I can't see," resumed Moore, slightly disconcerted—"I can't see precisely the cause of your anger. Let us argue the matter coolly: what interest can it be of his to purchase an estate for the purpose of insulting you? What a means to an end!"

"Good God! Moore," exclaimed Vernon, furiously, "what a miserable begging of the question is this! what interest! as though men acted solely from motives of interest; and, if they did, as though men did not often mistake their own interest. I tell you, this Laurence is a thriving—or, rather now, a thriven—adventurer, who originally ingratiated himself in my house, with the paltry intent of making as much as he could out of us. Why, he would have married my sister to secure her fortune—nothing more; but I have baffled him there. The rest is obvious. He takes these means of triumphing over my misfortunes: d— him, for it! But he shan't escape me yet. Here's confusion to all scoundrels, Moore," he added; with a sudden change of tone, and he filled his glass; "what say you?"

"Ditto," cried Moore, as you say in the banking-house, "ditto. But now let us change the subject. You think Laurence a rascal—I consider him an honest man; mind that!—I am still of that opinion: but, hang the fellow! it's not worth spoiling one's wine, to dispute about the virtues or vices of any man."

"Well, be it so," cried Vernon, moodily; "have your own way—let me reflect upon mine."

"My own way!" said Moore, setting down his glass; "now, that's precisely *your* way, Vernon; you know I'm open to conviction. I do still, and I must still, contend,



that Captain Laurence, or rather, Major Laurence, for I see he is gazetted—”

At this moment a servant entered the room.

“What do you want, girl?” cried Vernon, sharply.

“A gentleman below, sir, desired me to give you this,” and she handed Vernon a card.

Vernon looked at it, for a moment, and then leaning back in his chair, burst into a fit of immoderate laughter.

“Look at that,” said he, tossing the card over to Moore, “look at that; the subject of your contention is below.”

“Major Laurence!” cried Moore, reading the super-description; “but where are you going?” he added suddenly, as Vernon started to his feet, and made towards the door.

“Going?” replied Vernon; “where should I be going, but to that —”

At this juncture Moore interposed, and forced his friend into a chair. “Shut the door, my dear,” he said to the servant. “Vernon,” he continued in an under-tone, “what do you purpose doing? Laurence, you perceive, is down stairs; he *must* have some object in seeking you, apart from the unreasonable motive you ascribe to him. Will you see him?”

“Oh, let us see him, by all means,” replied Vernon, with a sneer, “let him be seen; we don’t often behold such spectacles. These men, let me tell you, Moore, are not often to be seen betimes of a morning at the front of Newgate.”

“Are you mad, or drunk?” remonstrated Moore; “the girl is in the room. What do you say? Will you see him?”

“As you please.”

“Bid the gentleman walk up,” said Moore, addressing the servant, and he returned to his chair. “Let me request you will be calm,” he resumed, when the girl had quitted the room. “Hear what he has to say: I am sure that a short explanation will set all to rights.”

“He is coming,” cried Vernon, glancing towards the door. “What did you say? explain? Suppose we speak plain, that will do as well, perhaps. But I will be calm enough.”

Moore watched the door with some anxiety, and immediately it opened, hastened forward, and caught Laurence by the hand. “Laurence, I am glad to see you,” he exclaimed cordially; “our friend Vernon is not quite him-

self to-night,"—and he endued his visage with a peculiar expression, which, intending to mean a great deal, happened unfortunately to be quite inexplicable to the other.

Laurence, having returned the salutations of his friend, approached Vernon. "I am sorry, my dear Vernon," said he, "to hear that you are unwell: give me your hand; it is time that the little difference, arising from some strange misunderstanding, should have an end."

"It is time our acquaintance should have an end, Major Laurence," said Vernon, turning away from him with a look of ill-disguised contempt; "what brings you here? what fresh insult do you purpose? what new indignity am I to suffer at your hands? But, beware, sir."

"Insult! indignity!" repeated Laurence; "what do you mean, Vernon? Surely, after what has taken place; after the full—"

"Explanation, you intend to make of every thing," interrupted Moore, coming between them; "to be sure, nothing can be fairer—be calm, Vernon. Laurence, my boy, sit down;" and Moore busied himself with the decanters, and at length pushed a glass towards Laurence.

"Try this wine, will you?" said he, "you'll find it capital. Vernon was always an excellent judge of wine, eh? ha! ha!" and he coughed like a man who endeavors to prevent two others from speaking, or of hearing each other if they do speak.

"Where do you get your wine, Vernon?" he added, in a tone, and with the look, of one to whom an explicit answer would be of the last importance.

"This is perfectly disgusting," exclaimed Vernon, thrusting his glass from him. "Major Laurence, I ask you again, what brings you here? Do you come to visit Mr. Moore, or me? if Mr. Moore, you can see him at his own house; if me, here I am at your service," and he took out his watch and laid it upon the table; "for five minutes—no longer."

"Good God, Vernon!" cried Laurence, impatiently, "your conduct is certainly the most extraordinary that ever came under my observation; nor have I hitherto thought I could have put up with such undeserved, such wilful and wanton misconstruction. Recollect, sir," and he reddened, as he proceeded—"there is a limit even to my forbearance."

"Forbearance!" thundered Vernon, rising suddenly,

and advancing towards Laurence with clenched hands—"forbearance!"

"No quarrelling, gentlemen, I insist upon it," cried Moore, in an authoritative tone, to which the parties addressed would probably have paid little attention, but that the portly person of that gentleman, violently thrust between them, precluded the possibility of the one encountering, or even seeing the other.

"What is the meaning of all this violence, I should be glad to know?" he continued. "For shame, sir; cannot two men argue a question coolly, as I make a point of doing—an invariable point?"

"I was wrong," said Laurence, "and I acknowledge it. I should have been less hasty. It is, however, Mr. Vernon's own fault, that he will not permit his friends to remember, at the moment, that he has claims upon their most considerate construction of all his actions. Vernon!" and Laurence turned towards him with an aspect of concern, "I feel for you, and with you—upon my soul I do—there is not at this moment one of your friends—not even Moore himself—who has a more disinterested regard for you than myself—there is not, upon my honor."

During this speech, Vernon had been standing with folded arms, gazing at the other with a look of supreme scorn.

"What is that?" said he, "upon your honor!—I believe you—the cant is worthy of, and like, you."

"Have I said enough?" said Laurence, appealing to Moore. "Vernon, but one word more. You have received a letter from me, within these few days—surely, having read it, you must not, you shall not, any longer mistake me. Some skulking scoundrel must have belied me to you."

"It were sorry employment to invent calumnies of you, Laurence," retorted Vernon. "Leave me;—but stay—I have received a letter from you," and he drew out his pocket-book; "here it is—take it, and begone."

So saying, he flung the letter towards him.

"Unopened," said Laurence, in a tone of deep mortification.

"For God's sake, Moore, show the rascal the door, will you?" cried Vernon, turning upon his heel. "What the devil! is a man's time to be abused with such idle chatter as this?"

Laurence had been growing very pale, whilst Vernon was yet speaking, and a violent emotion shook his entire frame. He was about to advance towards Vernon, when Moore caught him by the arm.

"What, in Heaven's name, is the meaning of all this foolery?" he roared; "why don't you explain? one word will do it. What are the contents of the letter? were I inclined to quarrel with you both, I should say you were a brace of the most perverse fools it was ever my misfortune to be troubled with. Explain—explain—explain."

"I cannot now, Mr. Moore," said Laurence, with forced calmness; a moment's reflection will satisfy you that I cannot—cannot. This letter," and he placed it in his pocket, "had Mr. Vernon condescended to read it, would have told him all; nor would this unhappy—for I will call it so—this unhappy quarrel have taken place. For you, sir," and gently removing Moore from betwixt them, he approached Vernon—"all connection—all communication—I mean, of a friendly nature—ceases between us for ever. You shall hear from me again, and soon. You may smile, sir; but you must and *shall* open my second letter. You know the alternative; meantime, reflect that to impute baseness to others, very frequently argues an equal degree of baseness to that which is attributed. Oh, Vernon, Vernon! I will not permit myself to employ a stronger phrase. I *pity* you."

So saying, and grasping Moore's hand as he stepped past him, he hastily left the room.

A period of half an hour's duration elapsed after the departure of Laurence, and not a syllable had been exchanged between the two friends. Vernon had sunk into a state of gloomy apathy, out of which Moore did not appear greatly disposed to rouse him. At length, silence, which was by no means Mr. Moore's *forte*, began to be somewhat irksome; and drawing out his snuff-box, to which he applied only on important occasions, he imbibed a considerable pinch, and, after a short pause, delivered himself, as follows:

"I must really tell you, Vernon, although I should be sorry to say anything that might add to your recent excitement, that your conduct towards Laurence this evening was quite unjustifiable—quite so. You must be aware, that—"

"What?" interrupted Vernon, abruptly.

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"I say," continued Moore in a louder key, "that no man of honor—no gentleman can put up with such treatment. I say further"—

"Now, now, spare me, for God's sake," cried Vernon, "the infliction of your good sense. Nay, I don't wish to offend you, Moore; but permit me to be the best judge of my own actions."

"You're a very bad one, whether I permit you to be the best or not," retorted Moore; "are you prepared to fight the man, that's the question."

Vernon smiled contemptuously. "He fight!" said he; "what! that creature—that thing, who just now left us, fight! Not he; I could almost respect him, if the man possessed a particle of courage."

"By my soul, but he *will* fight," cried Moore, decisively; "and I'm almost glad of it, since that appears to be the only way of recovering your good opinion. You will meet him, of course; for I know you too well to hope that you mean to apologise."

"Apologise!" exclaimed Vernon; "my dear Moore, you do not intend to—"

"Insult you? no," said the other; "although, I must say, that an apology, when offered—"

"Yes, yes, I know all that," cried Vernon; "I take it for granted you will act as my second in this business;" and he laughed.

"I don't like it," said Moore; "it's not pleasant to act as second to a man in the wrong; but I myself was not right to permit this quarrel to take place, and I must see you through this affair, I suppose."

"Captain Bouverie, sir," said the servant, entering the room.

Vernon and Moore stared at each other for a moment, in silence.

"Rather prompt," said the latter, rising, and replacing his snuff-box in his pocket.—"Show Captain Bouverie up stairs, my dear. Shut the door."

"Now, Vernon," he added, "get you into the back room; I shall see Bouverie myself; he's a fine lad, and must not be spoken to in your way. Come, get you in," and he opened the folding door; "if you're wanted, I'll call you."

Vernon obeyed mechanically; for there is something in an authoritative tone and manner which frequently carries

its own way with it, even against the most perverse and obstinate people.

"Bouverie, very happy to see you, although not on the business you come about," said Moore, as Bouverie walked into the room. "Come this way," and he drew him towards the fire; "you bring a message from Laurence?"

"I do," said Bouverie; "Laurence led me to expect I should find Mr. Vernon at home."

"He's within," said Moore; "but sit down, let us talk the matter over."

"I would rather, first," said Bouverie, "deliver this note into Mr. Vernon's hands."

"No," cried Moore, grasping the arm of the other; "I bar that," and he tapped his forehead with his finger; "do you understand? not the thing, *here*. We can settle it between us in five minutes. Give me the letter."

"If that's the case," cried Bouverie, "I do not hesitate to place the note in your hands."

Moore perused the contents hastily, and transferred the note to his pocket.

"Now—all right—very well," said he, pondering for a few seconds; "now, Captain Bouverie, where is it to be? the ground—the spot—what do you say?"

"I am, I confess," said Bouverie, smiling at the other's coolness, "although a soldier, not so well practised in these affairs as yourself. I should say——"

"They do not come by nature," interrupted Moore, importantly; "time and experience do wonders. Well, I don't know—where shall we say?"

"Chalk-farm?" suggested Bouverie.

"Won't do," cried Moore; "pigeon shooting there—a place for tobacco-pipes, pints of porter, and skittles—it's very low, I assure you—never did since the barber winged the linendraper's factotum. They warned off a sweep and a dustman a little while ago, I'm told. No, no. By the bye, I know a sweet spot just under Hampstead, where the thing can be managed comfortably. I was there once on my own account." And he described the position of the field, and its capabilities for honorable purposes, with extraordinary minuteness.

"It is, of course, quite immaterial to us," said Bouverie, "where this unpleasant business is concluded;" and he raised his hat to depart. "Six o'clock, you say?"

"Precisely," cried Moore; "to the minute. We shall

be on the ground—good night”—and shaking Bouverie by the hand, he escorted him to the door, with a dignity which he could occasionally put on, and which, to say the truth, Mr. Moore sometimes exhibited when it was by no means necessary to do so.

It may appear strange to some of our readers, that Moore should have conducted the foregoing hostile preparations in a spirit of levity which by no means accorded with the nature of the business about to be undertaken. But it must be recollected, that Moore was perfectly a man of the world, and that, amongst the class in which he had been accustomed to move, such transactions are looked upon as inevitable, and almost necessary occurrences, which confer a certain stamp upon gentlemen of honor and spirit: a mode of viewing such matters, which will, in all probability, continue to be popular, until some man, possessed at once of approved courage, high rank, and acknowledged weight in the great world, shall exhibit moral courage enough to discountenance and disallow the senseless and barbarous authority of custom.

It must be pleaded, also, in behalf of Moore, that he was well aware of the utter hopelessness of attempting to prevail upon Vernon to make the *amende honorable* to Laurence; an attempt which he felt, supposing Vernon's opinion of the other to be well-founded, he could not, with any decency make; and, finally, Moore, who really entertained a sincere friendship for Vernon, and was prone to believe the best of Laurence, had a strong hope that this duel would pave the way for a better understanding between both, than had, for a long time past, subsisted.

"You may come out," said he, opening the folding-door; "it's all settled."

"I know it," replied Vernon, coming forward; "I could not avoid overhearing you. Where is the letter?—there is nothing offensive in it, I hope!"

"Nothing," said Moore; "the usual thing. Have you got your pistols with you? Did you bring them to town?"

"I did."

"Every thing handy and convenient?"

"Quite."

"Right," said Moore. "By the bye, I must trouble your servant to carry a note for me to Mrs. Moore—for I shall stay with you to-night."

Whilst Moore was writing his letter, and for a long

time after he had despatched it, Vernon sat buried in deep and abstracted reflection. It was observable, and the circumstance was not overlooked by Moore, that his face wore a totally different expression to that which had now almost become habitual to him, and that his usually nervous and unquiet movements had subsided altogether. Deeper, perhaps better, feelings than had long possessed him, were now busy within his breast, nor had he the power or the will to discard them.

"You seem melancholy," said Moore, in a softer tone than usual, for he had been watching Vernon closely for some minutes. "These matters compel a man to think ——"

"Yes," said Vernon, shaking himself out of his stupor; "they do so. Melancholy?—not at all. 'Tis growing late, Moore—you can occupy my bed: I have of course, several things to attend to, which will probably engage me the whole night:" and he arose, and brought his writing-desk to the table.

"I shan't turn in to-night," said Moore; "never do on such occasions. By your leave, I shall draw the sofa to the fire;—I shan't disturb you—be off in five minutes, fast as a church.—Give me a shake at four, will you?"

As he said this, Moore arranged the sofa to his notions of temporary comfort, pulled off his boots, loosened his neckcloth, laid himself at full length, and in five minutes was not only as fast as a church, but, to all appearance, as dead as a churchyard.

Vernon stood for a time listlessly gazing at his sleeping friend, and then with a short but heavy sigh turned towards his desk, and leaning his head upon his hands, relapsed into long and earnest thought.

By four o'clock, however, he had completed all that he deemed necessary to arrange; and awaking his companion, who started from his couch with all the alacrity of one accustomed to these sudden summonings, informed him that he was now in perfect readiness to accompany him.



## CHAPTER XIV.

"O, this poor brain! ten thousand shapes of fury  
Are whirling there, and reason is no more."

THE hostile message, which had been so promptly despatched by Laurence, wrought a strange revolution in the mind and feelings of Vernon. It was not only altogether unexpected by him, but he could not help feeling also, that the entire fabric of mistake and misconception which he had raised to the prejudice of Laurence, was founded upon a belief of his pusillanimity and cowardice. He had imagined Laurence, hitherto, to be a man whose baseness was compelled to resort to the most despicable duplicity for the attainment of its ends; and, although it is very well known to be a difficult thing to convince a man against his will, yet it may also be said, with as much truth, that when the will concurs to the belief, conviction is always close at hand to confirm it, however outrageous and improbable the grounds for such belief may be.

Horace Vernon was a man of unquestionable, nay, of reckless courage; and like many others who possess that common commodity, he felt a proportionate degree of respect for any man who displayed it in his own person, and was weak enough, like many others, too, in this respect, to attribute to its possessor other qualities which have no necessary connection with, or dependence on, it. He was too ready to suspect that a man of spirit could not be guilty of a mean and paltry action, and thought that cowardice not only included, but almost avowed, all imaginable baseness.

The course of life which Vernon had for some years past pursued, and the untoward position of his affairs, which was at once the cause and the effect of it, had in-

disposed and almost incapacitated him from pursuing a calm and rational train or process of thought; and it was only upon some signal or urgent occasion that he could command nerve or resolution sufficient to retrace any progress of circumstances or feelings to its source. It is very much the custom of many men of sanguine and excitable temperament—a fault of which Vernon partook largely—that when they are thwarted in their expectations from one portion of the world, they transfer their chagrin and mortification to another—and because they have been once deceived, with their eyes open, by those who had no interest in sparing them, voluntarily blind themselves to the friendship of others, who can derive no advantage from their misfortunes. In other words, such men having been so weak as to expect to find virtue in scoundrels, with the same weakness expect to find nothing but vice in honest men. Whilst this hallucination exists, like Timon of Athens, “all is oblique” with these persons; and the difficulty of proving to them that any sincerity or honor remains in the world, is all the greater when you endeavor to show that their own friends possess a particle of the one or the other.

The liability of being suddenly dismissed to another world, is, however, sufficient, probably, to compel most men to set themselves seriously down to reflect upon the reasons which may have precipitated them upon this contingency. And when Vernon, having made such a disposition of his affairs as present circumstances rendered it imperative upon him to arrange, with as much calmness and self-possession as he could muster—when he came to reflect upon his quarrel with Laurence, upon the causes which had brought it about, upon the original motive of his animosity towards him, he could not conceal from himself that there was positively nothing (except his own wayward and unworthy surmises) which could be urged as a plea for the conduct he had with such obstinate consistency pursued. The scales fell from his eyes, and he now perceived that, whatever might be the event of the duel then pending, when every thing came to be known, he would be stigmatized either as a captious and quarrelsome fire-eater, eager for any pretext to quarrel with his friends; or, which was far more galling, ridiculed for a senseless and ill-conditioned blockhead, who had altogether mistaken his relative position in society, and had

ignorantly gone out of his way to insult a man equal in every respect to himself. It may be imagined, therefore, that when Moore sprang from the sofa, and began to apply himself to the business of the morning, he found his friend in no very enviable state of mind and temper—a moral condition to which Moore paid little heed, that gentleman having experienced so much of it as, by this time, perfectly to have ascertained the amount of attention or respect to which it was properly entitled.

It was an axiom with Moore, that no man should go forth upon such expeditions as they were about to engage in, or, indeed, encounter the chilly air of early morning upon any pretext whatever, until he had inwardly fortified himself with coffee and a caulker of brandy. Accordingly, he descended into the kitchen with apparently an instinctive knowledge of its several localities, from whence he presently emerged with coals, wood, a coffee-pot, and the other indispensables.

"I am a hand at these things, you see," said he, as, in a few minutes a pot of coffee was placed upon the table. "It is, I take it, one of the most important duties a man has to learn, to conduct these matters through every stage with perfect propriety. Let me see your pistols."

He examined them with great minuteness, and after a prolonged scrutiny, declaring them unexceptionable, drank his coffee, helped himself at the sideboard to a large glass of brandy, a duplicate of which he handed to Vernon; and putting on his hat and gloves, signified that he was in a becoming state of readiness.

Vernon was not slow to prepare himself to accompany him. The state of suspense and inquietude in which a man necessarily finds himself, between the acting and the completion of the duties exacted by modern honor, was becoming intolerable to him. He, however, previously to his setting forth, doubled the dose of brandy Moore had prescribed for him.

They walked on for a considerable distance without speaking, Moore slightly taking the lead, and humming as much of a martial air, as his ear, by no means an acquisitive one, had been enabled to retain.

"Moore," said Vernon, at length, "I have been engaged, during the night, in settling my affairs. If anything should happen to me in this business ——"

"You should never advert to contingencies," said Moore, "unless you wish them to take place. Mum's the word to misfortune. She should always make her call without invitation. It's all very well to whistle for a wind, but I never do it, lest it should be an ill one."

"I beg your pardon," remonstrated Vernon, "it is quite proper that these things should be spoken about. Here—take the key of my writing-desk; you will find a letter there addressed to yourself, in which two others are enclosed for my sisters. You will perceive, should there be any necessity for your opening it, that I have made a heavy claim upon your friendship, which I have had reason to believe sincere."

"I think you have had reason so to believe," exclaimed Moore; "and you may believe it whether you have or not. You may rely upon me, if—oh! but this is absurd—" and he began to whistle. "Come along."

Vernon grasped his offered hand, which was extended to him sideways as they proceeded, and a long silence ensued. A turning in the road caused Moore to project his head exploringly. "Here we are at last," he said, taking out his watch, "and in excellent time too. The back of the field yonder, which you may just see behind that cluster of houses, is the spot I have pitched upon for you. You couldn't get better ground, I'll venture to say, within the precincts of Mogg."

"Wait a moment," said Vernon, taking him by the arm; "one moment—I wish to speak to you," and he placed himself opposite to Moore, and looked at him earnestly.

"I fancy, Moore, you consider me a man of courage?"

"Who doubts it?" cried Moore, in surprise at this unexpected question, and at so extraordinary a time.

"I think, Moore," resumed Vernon, "you know that I am no coward?"

"By my soul, I do!" said Moore, "and *you* know, I suppose, that I am not accustomed to go out with poltroons. By the Lord! I should think the final employment commonly assigned to spinsters, of leading apes to the lower regions, a more honorable one than that of lugging cowards to Hampstead at six o'clock in the morning. But what do you mean? I don't understand your drift?"

"By G—, Moore," replied Vernon, "I have a presentiment which I cannot shake off—a presentiment —"

"That you'll be shot?" inquired Moore, rather coldly.

"No—no—not that:—what if I were? but of some impending calamity—some —"

"Oh! confound your presentiments," cried Moore; "hark! I hear the rumble of wheels; there they are, by Jove, just getting out of Laurence's cab, on the other side of the field;" and he seized him by the arm, and lugged him forward; "this is no time for presentiments—I had a presentiment, when a boy, that I should be made a lord long ere this—and here I am, a plain commoner still."

"It must be so: I cannot avert it, if it be fate," muttered Vernon, as with hasty steps they advanced towards the field.

"No;—no averting fate, as you say," cried Moore, vaulting over the stile; "like the rest of the female sex, she will have her own way. Stand here," he added, as they approached within a few paces of Laurence and Bouverie, "whilst I pay my respects to these gentlemen."

Moore walked forward for that purpose, raising his hat, as he drew near, with a politeness which is held to be indispensably necessary on such occasions. A short consultation ensued between himself and Bouverie, whilst Laurence and Vernon stood facing each other, without the slightest sign of recognition.

Certain necessary preliminaries having been arranged, the two seconds placed their principals, and without delay, handed a pistol to each.

"When I say 'Fire!'" cried Moore in a loud voice—and he waited a few moments—"Fire!"

Immediately on the report of the pistols, the seconds advanced. "No great harm done," said Moore—and now Bouverie approached. The two conferred together for a short time, and separated.

"Laurence demands a second shot," said Moore gravely; "I am sorry for that."

"Why?" said Vernon abruptly—and his face, which was pale before, became almost wan, and his lips expanded with a rigid smile: "why sorry, Moore? hand me that pistol," and he held out his left hand, and taking it from Moore, leisurely placed the finger of his other hand upon the trigger, gazing, or rather staring at Laurence, at the same time, with a cold and almost baneful eye. "Re-

ture," said he, "and give the signal. He is, I perceive, ready."

"Fire!" cried Moore again. Before, however, the seconds could well advance, Vernon having discharged his pistol, flung it violently into the air, and Laurence, staggering back a few paces, raised his hand to his breast, and fell heavily to the ground.

"He's hit, by heaven!" cried Moore, running towards the wounded man, whose head Bouverie had raised upon his knee:—"where is it, Bouverie; not serious, I hope;—where is it, my dear boy?" and he helped to raise Laurence to his feet.

"He cannot stand," said Bouverie, in a tone of deep concern; "I fear he's wounded dangerously—what's to be done?"

Here Laurence groaned heavily.

"Can he speak, do you think?" whispered Bouverie.

"Yes—yes," he gasped. "Tell Vernon not to leave me—I have something to say to him—particular—important," and opening his eyes, he recognised Moore, and laid his hand upon his arm: "keep him, will you?"

Moore said nothing, but arose from his side, and went in quest of Vernon, whom he found in the high road, pacing to and fro distractedly, with his hands clenched before him.

"Come with me," said Moore, touching him on the shoulder; "Laurence is hurt seriously, and wishes to see you—he has something to communicate."

"Seriously?" said Vernon, in a hollow voice: "yes, he'll die—he's dying—I have killed him—I know that —"

"However," cried the other, "not so bad as that, I hope."

"We should exchange forgiveness with the dying, shouldn't we, Moore?" said Vernon vaguely.

"Yes, and with the living too," answered Moore, taking his arm, and leading him into the field; "if you had done that, this cursed mischance would not have happened; but, never mind, it can't be helped now."

"My God!" cried Bouverie, greatly distressed, as they approached, "he has fainted. He'll die before any assistance can be procured."

"Yes—yes—yes—he'll die," cried Vernon wildly: "I told Moore so, but he wouldn't believe me."

"Hold your tongue, and be d——d," bellowed Moore: "here come three or four fellows;—here, I say;" and he ran towards them, and returned shortly. "I have dispatched them;" said he, "for something on which to carry him to the public house hard by. "We'll have a doctor to him in a few minutes."

The men presently returned, bearing a hurdle, on which Laurence was carefully placed, and the party slowly proceeded towards the Nag's Head, just as the landlord was issuing forth to inhale the morning air.

The host of the Nag's Head, whose name was Hammond, unlike too many members of the victuallers' fraternity, who hang forth—

"——— a flag and sign of love  
Which is, indeed, but sign ——"

and would fain that the community at large should live, like woodcocks, upon suction;—Hammond, we say, was a man who could exercise kindness and attention to others, even when his interest was not likely to be much advanced by his doing so; or rather, in cases where his good offices were required, was apt to discard all remembrance of his own interest from his mind. Having been apprised, then, of the circumstances of the present case, he lost no time in sending his boy for Mr. Rennie, the surgeon, whilst his wife, with equal alacrity, prepared a chamber for Laurence, into which he was forthwith carried.

The breakfast which Moore now ordered was, as the reader may easily conceive, a matter more of form than of necessity. Moore was really deeply concerned at the issue of this unfortunate event, and although he endeavored from time to time to put a good face upon the matter, and to assure Vernon that all would yet end well, he still had too good reason to believe that the wound which Laurence had received was mortal. Vernon, on the other hand, after the first excitement had past over, consequent upon the melancholy result of the duel, in accordance with his sanguine nature, was hoping and momentarily expecting tidings of Laurence's safety; and yet, at the same time, there was just sufficient doubt of it to render his situation far from easy. Vernon was a man of the most generous nature, and yet of the most unjust suspicions—a result which a commerce with mankind

frequently induces; and we believe it to be a condition of human nature, that a man cannot associate with any class of human beings without partaking in some degree, more or less, of its peculiar characteristics.

Breakfast was scarcely on the table, before Bouverie made his appearance; Moore hastened to meet him.

"How is he now?" said he, "what says the doctor? better, I hope."

"I fear, said Bouverie mournfully, "that he is in a very bad way. He tells me, Moore," he continued earnestly, "that you are his friend; he wishes you to remain with him, and when he has strength to do so," and he glanced towards Vernon, "he desires to speak to him. I am going to Brighton upon as trying an occasion, God knows, as ever man was called upon to undertake. You will see to him; you will take care of him."

"I will—I will," said Moore, the tears streaming from his eyes; "God bless you, my dear boy!" and Mr. Moore, not deeming the evidence of such womanly weakness, as it is called, to be honorable to him, withdrew from the room.

Moore returned in about half-an-hour. "Vernon," said he, and he beckoned to him, and he came towards him, as though previously prepared for the summons—"Laurence wishes to see you; to take his leave of you; to exchange forgiveness with you," and he pressed his arm; "do not be mistaken," he added, "the doctor says that there is no hope for him—he is dying; will you accompany me?"

"I will," answered Vernon with strange calmness. They ascended the stairs, and entered a back room. The eyes of Laurence were closed, as though in sleep, when they entered, but he opened them on their approach, and motioned them to draw near.

"Moore," said he languidly, "I know you will do me the favor to leave Vernon and myself together, for a few minutes."

"To be sure I will," said Moore, making towards the door; "but remember what the doctor says; don't excite yourself, do you hear?" and he withdrew to an adjoining apartment.

"Vernon," resumed Laurence, "take this chair by my side, for I have but little breath left; and that, the doctor said," he added with a faint smile, "I must make go as far as I can. Oh! Vernon," he added sorrowfully, after a

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pause, and he took his hand between his own; "I have something to tell you which I know will—" and he hesitated, "excite you; for you are not prepared for it; promise me that you will bear what I have to say—with resignation—with fortitude."

Vernon did not answer for some time.—"I fear, Laurence," he said at length—"I might almost say I hope—that I have done you some injustice—" and he pressed his clasped hand;—"if I have, I wish you to forgive me."

"Pride," answered Laurence, "false pride leads us to do many weak things; I was foolish to demand a second shot—but I knew you, Vernon—it was the only hope left to me, that you would understand me. Horace Vernon," he continued more solemnly, "you *have* done me an injustice. I knew your distress—your embarrassments—and I would have done every thing to lighten them; to the last farthing I have, I would have done so, but you would not permit me; you would still mistake me."

Vernon was about to speak.

"Hear me," cried Laurence, "while I have yet power to speak, nay, be calm, for I must say it. Oh! that you had read my letter to you. I bought your estate at Egham with no unworthy, unfriendly, or insulting intention, as you, I know, believed."

"Why did you leave this till now?" said Vernon between his teeth; "why have you betrayed me into this? Was it not enough to me, *to me*, that you should have said as much? Oh! Laurence," and he laid his hands upon his shoulders; "if you have been the cause of losing me altogether;—if to my other crimes that of murder is to be added;—if I am to be *sold* to hell—"

He paused, for Laurence had sunk back upon his pillow; he raised his hand faintly: "Be calm, I implore you," he said, after a long pause:—"Horace Vernon, I have something yet to tell you, which must be said at once. Leave me, then, and see me once more—when I am dead. When I am dead," he repeated, "your sister Charlotte will be a widow."

"How?" cried Vernon wildly.

"She is my wife—your sister is my wife."

A loud cry, a shriek burst from Vernon's lips, as he dropt upon the ground, as one suddenly struck by lightning, which caused Moore to burst into the room, fol-

lured by the inmates of the house. Moore was the first to hasten to his assistance.

"I thought it would be so," said Laurence; "I knew it was a mistake, a wretched mistake; never—never—with all his faults, lived a nobler being than Horace Vernon."

Moore was too much busied with his friend to hear this speech, but calling the landlord to his aid, with some difficulty he raised Vernon from the floor, and carried him into another room.

"Leave us, my good friends," said Moore, addressing the people of the house, when they had placed Vernon in a chair; "he will recover sooner with me, than with strangers. Hammond, bring up a bottle of wine, come—quick's the word"—and Moore instantaneously cleared the apartment.

"What the deuce is the matter with you, my dear fellow," said he, and he shook him by the hand, and called him by his name. "Upon my soul," he continued, soliloquising, "I've got myself into a pretty business; what the plague Mrs. Moore imagines at this moment, I am at a loss to conceive, and hardly dare guess; she's as nervous as a cat, and d—n me, almost as—" Here, as though that train of reflection were likely to be neither profitable nor pleasant, he applied more vigorously to the shoulder of his friend—"Vernon! Vernon!"

Vernon raised his eyes vacantly to the face of Moore, and passed his hand across his forehead, as if endeavoring to recal some indistinct memory. "Where am I? What's the matter?" a heavy sigh escaped him, and he sunk back again in a state of stupor.

There was a gentle knock at the door, Moore went to it, and admitted Hammond, who entered with the bottle of wine.

"Dr. Rennie, sir," said the host, "particularly wishes to see you; he is waiting in the passage."

"My dear sir," said the surgeon, as Moore stepped out of the room to speak to him; "I think it my duty to tell you, that your friend in the next room, is in a very bad way."

"God bless me," cried Moore, in sad perplexity; "I'm very sorry to hear that: I fear doctor," he added, "we have another patient for you, in here;" and he pointed over his shoulder; "but what do you mean by his being in a bad way? you gentlemen—"

"He cannot recover, sir," answered the doctor gravely; "he will die, sir; since I extracted the ball, his strength has appeared to decline greatly, and he is now in a high state of fever; it is probably unnecessary to inquire whether his friends have been sent for."

"They have, doctor: Captain Bouverie left this house two hours ago, for that purpose."

"Allow me to ask, sir," pursued the doctor, "whether they live at any considerable distance from this; it is of all things important that his wife should be made aware —"

"He's not married, that one's consolation—a bachelor, Mr. Rennie."

"How?" cried the other, "not married; you are mistaken, I fear. The poor gentleman has been raving, talking incoherently about his wife; he calls her Charlotte; and he speaks frequently of one Miss Vernon."

Moore dashed his fist to his forehead. "Oh, God! I see it all now; infernal fool! ass! madman!" and he directed a glance towards Vernon; "let me see him for Heaven's sake—" and he thrust the doctor towards the room in which Laurence lay:—"Oh, my dear sir, you must save him; you must, by Heaven you *must*; I would not for all the world, for all the world, doctor, that this should end fatally."

The good woman of the house was in attendance upon Laurence, and arose on their entrance. Moore sat down in the vacant chair, and taking the hand of Laurence, grasped it warmly. "My good fellow," said he, "why didn't you speak out last night? you knew that madman in the next room—but he *has* had many things," he continued in a milder tone, "he *has* had many things to vex and harass him. Oh, this cursed folly, which men call pride."

"True, true," said Laurence faintly. "Oh Moore, if—"

"Don't speak about it," cried Moore; "how do you feel yourself now?"

"As one who has nearly done with this world," cried Laurence; "but pardon me, permit me to tell you all;" and at some length, and with considerable difficulty, he related what the reader has already been apprised of, taking a great portion of the blame to himself, and mitigating, as far as possible, the conduct of Vernon throughout.

"You're a noble fellow, Laurence—by my soul you are," cried Moore, when he had concluded, and he arose, and walked to the window, taking out his handkerchief. "I wonder," he added in an under tone, "how long it is since I was caught snivelling, before," and he examined the landscape for some time, with rueful, but not very clear-sighted earnestness.

"Where is Vernon?" said Laurence, faintly.

"Oh, hang him!—don't care about him," cried Moore, savagely: "he's in the next room, bewailing his cursed misdeeds, I suppose—which he calls fate—his common practice."

"Go to him," urged Laurence; "he requires a friend by him at this time, I know. Hark! I hear him walking about the room."

"By the Lord, he does need somebody with him," said Moore, suddenly recollecting himself; "he'll be drinking the wine, and playing his mad pranks, and we shall have the devil to pay, and no one to take the reckoning." And so saying, he hastened from the room.

As Moore opened the door, he just caught a glimpse of Vernon's ghastly countenance reflected in the looking-glass, before which he was standing; for Vernon, hearing the step of some one approaching, sprang quickly round, and dropt something from his hand. His cravat had been torn from his neck, and lay upon the fender; and Moore perceived that it was a penknife which had that moment fallen.

He darted forward and seized Vernon by the wrists. "Good heavens! Vernon!" he exclaimed, in alarm, "what is this?—what were you about to do?"

Vernon stared at him with glassy eyes, and gnashed his teeth—struggling violently to disengage himself from the hold of the other.

"Be calm, I implore you—I insist," cried Moore; and he held him firmly for a moment. "What!—don't you know your old friend?—don't you know me?"

"Yes—I do," cried Vernon, breaking violently away from him, and seizing him by the collar; "you are Livingstone.—I will have your heart's blood, Livingstone—I will—I will—I will——"

The doctor, the landlord, and several others, now burst into the room, each endeavoring, by some ingenious process of his own, effectually to secure Vernon; a subtlety

of contrivance which had nearly proved fatal to Moore—since, before they had succeeded in effectually withholding Vernon, he had dashed the other to the ground, and was attempting to strangle him.

“What’s to be done with this man? said Moore to the doctor, when he had risen, and had recovered a portion of breath.

“I have sent for two men accustomed to these matters,” answered the doctor. “He is raving mad. This is a deplorable case. Mercy on us! his shrieks will alarm the neighborhood.”

“Go to Major Laurence,” urged Moore, “and make the best of this melancholy occurrence. I’ll see to my friend. This is what comes of taking care of one’s honor, doctor:—this is *satisfaction*.”

In about two hours, a coach was brought to the door—into which, Vernon, between two strong men, was with some difficulty thrust—and accompanied by Moore, they drove to his lodgings, in Jermyn-street.

## CHAPTER XV.

"I will go seek her;

She shall not, from my unweigh'd idleness,

Bear slander further."

THE breakfast things were cleared away at an early hour at Mr. Hopwood's as was usual at that well regulated establishment, and the respectable head, after carefully wiping the dust from his glasses, had seated himself to the serious perusal of the "Morning Herald." Georgina was apparently studying an Italian lesson, for she expected her master that morning; but it might be observed, from her listless manner, that her thoughts were otherwise occupied; and Mrs. Hopwood was too busily engaged to notice such a circumstance, for she was criticising Dr. Kitchener's receipt for a cheap Irish stew, an esteemed dish with her for the kitchen, "because," as she observed, "nothing was wasted."

Indeed, Georgina had of late appeared an altered girl. Her taste for coquetry and playfulness seemed to have given way to a more subdued demeanor; her countenance was marked by a more thoughtful expression than heretofore, and it might be evident to a very partial observer, that some secret, though powerful agent, had worked such a change in her manner and feelings. She held the pen in her hand, and her eyes were fixed on the book, but not a leaf did she turn, and the paper remained unstained by the ink.

"Good God! what a shocking affair!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Hopwood, lowering the newspaper, and looking around him. Both ladies were aroused to inquiry, as they met the really alarmed gaze of their respected relative.

"My dear Mr. Hopwood! what can have happened?" ejaculated his astonished wife; "nothing to—to—Lord Walgrave, I hope."

"No, no, thank God! but Mr. Bouverie—Captain I should ——" but Mr. Hopwood's further explanation was stopped by the alarming appearance of his daughter; for no sooner did he mention the name than the pen fell from her hand, her face became ashy pale, and had it not been for the prompt assistance rendered by her alarmed parents, she would assuredly have fallen to the floor.

"Georgina! my child! what ails you, my love?" cried the anxious father.

"Did you say Mr. Bouverie?" she uttered in a voice scarcely audible. "Did you say some accident?" and the most intense anxiety was visible on her countenance.

"Accident! my love! no, no, not to him—nor is anything the matter with him that I know," Mr. Hopwood hastily replied. "But your feelings are too susceptible, my love."

"You must indeed be cautious what you read from the newspaper, Mr. Hopwood," urged Mrs. Hopwood; "our poor child cannot bear such attacks upon her sensibilities."

"I am quite well now, mamma," returned Georgina; "it was merely the sudden feeling: I thought that—that —"

"Well, but, my love," gently remonstrated the father, "you really should not allow such things to affect you so powerfully—supposing that any accident *had* happened to Mr.—I should say Captain Bouverie—you have seen him but twice and —"

"My dear, Georgina is not very well," interposed Mrs. Hopwood; "and she must not be spoken to." For Mrs. Hopwood had observed the variation of color upon her daughter's cheek during this brief colloquy, and she was endowed with a sufficient degree of the quickness of genuine perception to guess at the state of Georgina's feelings, though the idea had never struck her before; for since Mr. Bouverie's departure from Egham, his name had scarcely ever been mentioned, unless, perhaps, Hopwood might occasionally have hazarded a conjecture respecting his sudden coming, and equally sudden departure, and the state of mystification into which he had thrown them.

When Hopwood was betrayed into the sudden excla-

mation by the paragraph in the newspaper, which indeed was no other than an account of the duel, his curiosity was as vividly excited by the appearance of the name of Bouverie in conjunction with those he so well knew, as his feelings were concerned in the result. Captain Bouverie's intimate knowledge of the parties, served at once to explain to him all that appeared inconsistent in his residence at Egham, and fixed his situation in society without further speculation. Of course he never doubted the identity of Mr. Bouverie of Egham, and of the Captain Bouverie mentioned in the paragraph. Hopwood had fully described to his wife his accidental meeting with Mr. Bouverie, subsequent to the dinner, and the result of that meeting, at which he had felt it so much his duty to set that gentleman right, with respect to the real character of the connection he had so unwarily formed. Georgina had partially learnt these facts through the communicative Susan, who had informed her of the departure of Agnes, no one knew whither; of the equivocal character of her mother; and of the total alienation of Mr. Bouverie from Agnes, by means of some representations made by her father.

Now the conscience of Georgina told her plainly, that the only circumstance which her father could relate to the disparagement of Agnes, was one in which she had been herself the heroine; and she little thought that so foolish an *escapade* would ever have had such unpleasant consequences. Her high feeling likewise revolted at the notion of her imprudence being shielded at the expense of another's reputation, and that, too, of her early friend, whom she began to love the more, as she knew her wronged, and fancied her suffering.

The admiration, or rather regard, she had conceived for Mr. Bouverie, ardent and strong as it was, in one of her age and peculiar turn of mind, nevertheless yielded to a high sense of honor and justice; and, conceiving herself to be the sole cause of his estrangement from Agnes, she would gladly, were it in her power, have undeceived him. To Mr. Bouverie, therefore, she would not have scrupled to confess the truth, although the avowal would cost her all she really held dear—his good opinion; for she could not now hope for a stronger feeling. But to her father, she dared not speak of it; he was, perhaps, the only one to whom she shrunk from so humiliating a confession.



It was these thoughts which preyed upon the mind of Georgina, and made her listless and inattentive to what was passing around her; it was the result of a determined struggle against a hopeless passion, and a sense of the reparation she owed to Agnes, for the wrong she had so unwittingly caused her, that made her thus thoughtful and dejected.

"But, my dear," resumed Mrs. Hopwood, her curiosity reviving as her daughter's equanimity was restored; "you did not say what had occurred?"

"A melancholy event indeed!" said Hopwood with feeling; "Captain Laurence, Major, I should say, poor gentleman! has lost his life in a duel with our late neighbor, Mr. Vernon."

He was interrupted by a natural exclamation of surprise and sorrow from both ladies.

"And I see by the paper that Mr.—I should say Captain Bouverie, after all, is a brother officer of poor Major Laurence, and acted as his second in the unhappy affair. Both officers were only gazetted to their rank a short time before. The misunderstanding originated in some unfortunate mistake; what with recent misfortunes, and this fatal affray, Mr. Vernon's mind has given way—dear me! dear me!"

"How very shocking!" exclaimed Mrs. Hopwood.

Georgina's eyes filled with tears.

"Why, it has been understood for some time that the Major was actually married to Miss Charlotte Vernon," said Mrs. Hopwood.

"I know he bought the estate here, intending to present it to Mr. Vernon," observed Mr. Hopwood; "Robinson hinted as much to me after the sale. But, I suppose the party most interested has been the last to learn these things. Sad thing—sad thing—hasty man, Mr. Vernon—always was."

"The Vernons have always been a proud family," said Mrs. Hopwood; "they never visited in the neighborhood."

"But mamma," interposed Georgina, "remember the ill health of poor Mrs. Vernon for so long a time, and poor Mr. Vernon continually from home."

"Yes, my love, I know all that," said Mrs. Hopwood; "and I know the Egham people are very disagreeable people to visit; but I *do* think your papa's station in life

might have been considered not so very inferior as— as—” and she cast an inquiring glance towards her intelligent helpmate.

“Why, my dear, Lord Walgrave does not think so,” answered Mr. Hopwood to his wife’s silent interrogatory; “and what is past, is past; but I’m sure I’m sorry for their misfortunes, very sorry.”

“And no one can be more sorry than I am,” repeated Mrs. Hopwood; who, after having relieved her heart from the little load of indignation which had sat heavily there for many a day, sincerely pitied the family, with all the feeling natural to a kind-hearted woman. “Poor Mr. Vernon! he is a kind, generous hearted man; many is the good deed he has done hereabouts; and I’ve no doubt all this could be traced to that artful hussey.”

“My love!” said Hopwood sharply, and casting a warning glance from his wife towards his daughter, he uttered some words in an under tone, amongst which, “ears of innocence” were alone intelligible.

“Well, well,” continued Mrs. Hopwood, her feelings for once getting the better of the *system*; “I wish I had known what I know now; it is a thousand pities that such creatures—”

“My dear love!” cried Hopwood almost in consternation—“pray remember!”

Mrs. Hopwood applied her handkerchief to her eyes two or three times in quick succession, and then, as if afraid to trust her feelings on a subject she knew to be dangerous, suddenly took up her cookery book, and quitted the room.

Mr. Hopwood resumed the perusal of his newspaper, and Georgina again dipped her pen into the ink, but it was mechanically; for if her thoughts before were too absorbing to allow her to devote a proper attention to her studies, the difficulty was now increased. Her feelings were powerfully excited by what she had just heard. The Vernon family merited her warmest sympathy, and above all, she had learned, what she had almost despaired of ever being made acquainted with—Mr. Bouverie’s real position in society. Neither did Mr. Hopwood find himself much interested in his employment; but folding his spectacles, and replacing the paper on the table, he sat for some few minutes in a musing posture.

“My love!” he observed to Georgina; “I don’t think

you have been in good spirits lately. I am afraid you have been too much within. But you must rally, my love; we shall shortly have a visitor."

This announcement the good gentleman expected would have roused the curiosity of his daughter to a point of eager inquiry; but Georgina answered vaguely.

"Why, my child, won't you guess who our visitor is to be?" said her father.

"Indeed, I cannot, papa!" answered Georgina, without the smallest apparent interest.

"Why, you puss! our friend, Lord Walgrave," returned her parent, in a tone intended to be joyful, but somewhat subdued by Georgina's evident reserve.

"Yes, my love; Lord Walgrave is about to honor us with a visit; it may be a week; it may be a fortnight; but we are sure to see him. I dined with his lordship yesterday. Georgina, my child! you are a happy girl; a fortunate girl!"

Georgina sighed deeply.

"For—I believe I may say so," continued Hopwood, too much engrossed with his subject, to heed Georgina's manner—"Lord Walgrave, my love, admires you; he admires the system in which you have been brought up; he respects me and your mamma; and indeed, my child, it is time that you should be made acquainted with the honor he intends you; he has solicited me the permission to visit constantly at our house, and solely, my Georgina, on your account—solely on your account. It makes your old father happy, my Georgina, to think that his child has sufficient qualities to merit the attention—the serious attention, I may say, of a nobleman of such rank; but on looking directly at Georgina, he saw with infinite surprise, that she by no means corresponded with his enthusiasm.

"You do not speak, Georgina. Are you not happy in such vast prospects? does it not delight you to see your father happy? Happy that the object of his life is accomplished."

"Accomplished, papa, in what manner?" said Georgina, inquiringly.

"In what manner? my love," repeated her father in a sharp tone. "Why do you ask such a question? Have you not understood me? The object of my life has been your happiness, and that I trust will shortly be accom-

plished. Lord Walgrave, my love, after the due consideration, which so important a subject requires, has finally made up his mind to solicit the honour—those were his very words, my love—the honour of your hand! *yours*, my love; the hand of *my* Georgina; my child; Viscountess Walgrave! and future head of the noble family of Lexington! Think of that, my child. Does not the contemplation of so much greatness, so unexpected, astonish—bewilder you?”

To have seen Georgina's countenance at that moment, one might have supposed that such offers were matters of every day occurrence with her;—for although, perhaps, a little paler than usual, it betrayed no emotion whatever.

“Well, child! you don't speak. It is I, your father, to whom you owe all this: you don't speak: you don't acknowledge your satisfaction; your delight!” and he looked at his daughter with earnest inquiry.

“I should be guilty of great deceit, papa,” replied Georgina, “if I could lead you to believe that Lord Walgrave's offer gave me any satisfaction: but, on the contrary, it gives me great uneasiness, for I am quite sure I never could be happy as Lord Walgrave's wife.”

These words were spoken in so calm and decided a tone, that Hopwood looked her full in the face, to see whether the expression corresponded with the sentiment expressed—and then, as though suddenly struck with an exceedingly comic notion, he flung himself back in his arm chair, and laughed hysterically.

“Can never be happy! ha! ha! ha! Great uneasiness! ha! ha! Capital—excellent.” But turning sharply to Georgina, his mirth as suddenly ceased, as though he had seen his own name in the bankrupt list; for not the slightest corresponding pleasantry could be traced on her perfectly calm countenance.

“Well, what is the girl looking at? why doesn't she speak?” exclaimed Hopwood, vehemently. “Will you break your father's heart? But come, my child,” he said, suddenly altering his voice, and putting his hand affectionately on her curly tresses; “say you are joking with me; I will forgive you, I will indeed; tell me so, Georgina; I know you will.” And the old man looked as if his life hung upon her lips.

“Ah! why will you force me to say so much,” said Georgina, sensibly affected. “Indeed, indeed, papa, I

cannot marry Lord Walgrave—I cannot respect him—I cannot love him!”

The eyes of the father were fixed upon his child, with an incredulous, bewildered expression of doubt and astonishment; but his usually serene face became gradually altered by passion.

“And you dare to say this to your father,” he at length broke forth; “to your father, who has toiled for you day and night—whose sole care has been your happiness—who has amassed wealth only for you alone!—ungrateful!”

“Why seek to marry me at all?” interposed Georgina. “Are we not happy at home? But to wed me to one whom I cannot respect——”

“Not respect Lord Walgrave!” exclaimed Hopwood. “Did any one ever hear the like? a nobleman of the highest rank! Girl—girl, you will drive me mad. But you *shall* have him: you *shall* respect him: you shan’t have an opinion about the matter. Out of my sight, hussy! out of my sight.”

“What *is* all this?” exclaimed Mrs. Hopwood, who at that moment opened the door, attracted by the excited tone of her husband’s voice. “Mr. Hopwood, what on earth is the matter?”

“The matter, my dear!—enough’s the matter!” answered Hopwood, somewhat lowering his tone. “This girl will drive me crazy. She says she cannot respect Lord Walgrave, and will not have him—not have Lord Walgrave!—ha! ha!—a nobleman of the highest rank! Why, my dear, you know it’s all settled. It would break my heart—it would—” and Mr. Hopwood sunk back into his chair, apparently exhausted by his conflicting feelings.

“Mr. Hopwood, you have done very wrong to speak to the child in the manner you have,” said Mrs. Hopwood, in a very serious tone, observing the agitation of Georgina—“very wrong, indeed: the poor child is not well; I’m sure she is not, and cannot bear it. Come to your mother, my love—compose yourself—never mind;” and the kind parent gently drew her within her embrace, as though she had been still an infant.

Georgina, quite overcome by maternal tenderness, threw herself upon her mother’s neck, and burst into a passion of tears. It was the first disagreement she had ever had with her father; and although she had, in her own mind,

long before determined to resist any despotic exercise of authority, yet it was not without a severe inward struggle that she could overcome her long habits of submission to parental dictation. Her resistance in this instance, however, might have been merely the result of a girlish feeling, on a subject in which, of all others, she felt a right to an independent opinion; but that feeling of independence was defined and strengthened by her acquaintance with Captain Bouverie; in comparison with whom, Lord Walgrave held a very slender place in her estimation. Her generous nature, however, was not proof against her mother's kindness, and she relieved her bursting heart on the maternal bosom.

"Mr. Hopwood, I am quite astonished that you should have spoken to the poor child in this manner," said Mrs. Hopwood severely; alternately kissing Georgina's cheek; and drying her eyes. "You ought to have left it to me. Who so proper as a mother? You ought to be ashamed, Mr. Hopwood." And the good lady's voice faltered, as though she could have wept with her daughter—so sympathetic are tears in female eyes.

Hopwood rose from his chair, and sat down again, and fidgetted about, not knowing whether to assert his authority, in spite of wife and daughter, or to temporise. But the sight of tears had a strange effect upon the old gentleman's feelings; and, fearful of giving way, he hurried out of the room.

"There, dry your eyes, my child," said her mother, tenderly; "think no more about it. It is true, your papa has framed this match with the best intentions; but he is too abrupt, and you are not well, Georgina; I'm sure you are not. Tell me, my love, has any thing vexed you, that your mother does not know?"

"Mamma, I am unhappy—very unhappy," said Georgina, almost inarticulately.

"Well, but, my love, only think what a match Lord Walgrave is," said Mrs. Hopwood, supposing that her daughter alluded to her father's communication; "such manners—such a rank—and so *very* amiable. Only think of that, Georgina."

"But remember what the major said of him, mamma," said Georgina, rallying somewhat; "and then, how shocking to marry a man who only cares for money!"

"My dear, we have every reason to believe that Lord

Walgrave has entirely altered," said Mrs. Hopwood. "Your papa has had several interviews with him lately; and it was but yesterday his lordship lodged a considerable sum of money in his hands, to pay off various claims upon him. He is going to Paris for a few days, to visit the earl, his father, who is very infirm, and is desirous to see him; and on his return he will pay us a visit. But do not be frightened, love," she said, seeing the color come into Georgina's cheeks; "if you don't like him, you shan't have him. But don't vex your papa. You will see his lordship—and try to like him—won't you, love!—there—don't fret yourself."

"I'll try to like him, mamma—I will," said, or rather sobbed, Georgina; "but do not urge me yet—not yet."

"No, my love; you shall have your own time, and your own way—remember that," said her mother; "and be under no fear that you shall marry a lord, or any body else, unless you like. But I see your papa is gone out, and I must go and see what the servants are about. Bless me, if it isn't one o'clock!" and she bustled out of the room, with all the nervousness of a confidential housekeeper who had left her keys in the store-room door.

Georgina, somewhat assured and comforted by her mother's promise, began, at her departure to revolve in her mind what course she was to pursue with regard to Agnes, whom she felt a longing desire to see. Whilst considering various plans which might lead to a communication with her, Georgina observed a lad loitering about the gate, passing and repassing, and looking, from time to time, at the windows. Georgina thought she had seen the boy before; and, looking at him more attentively, recognised Major Caisson's scapegrace nephew. The moment the boy saw Georgina's face above the blind, he made the most anxious signals to her to come out to him. Wondering what he could possibly have to say, Georgina opened the hall door very quietly, and let him in.

"I beg pardon, Miss Georgina," said he; "but I want to speak to you particularly; and if you can let me in by the garden gate, I can tell you all that I have to say, without any body being any the wiser."

Georgina was curious to know his communication, yet half afraid of the boy's mischievous talent.

"You must promise me you intend nothing wrong."

"O, honor bright!" returned young Mr. Hervey, placing

his hand upon his heart, with mock solemnity. "No—I've something to say which will interest you very much."

Georgina made a sign to him to go round to the gate; and putting on her bonnet, speedily let in the young amateur of squibs and crackers.

"Well," said he, "I'm glad I've seen you; but I've waited a precious long time for it. I saw your father go out, and the boy too; but I did not like to trust him; so I thought I would take the chance of your peeping out of window."

"Well, what have you to tell me? Make haste, or I shall be missed," said Georgina.

"Don't be in such a hurry," returned the young hopeful; "because you see I've got a good bit to say, and I shall be all the longer if you interrupt me. Your father is booked for some hours, for he is gone to town; so you've no fear for him. Now the fact is, that this is all a plan of my own—and now I'll tell you——"

Georgina hastily promised not to interrupt him, and he proceeded to unfold his plan.

"You must know, Miss Georgina, in the first place, that I got a situation as a post-boy at the post-office—that is, you know, a lad that rides backwards and forwards to town from country places, with letters, on a broken-kneed pony, and wears a blue jacket and a cockade. Well, some little time ago, when I was riding up to town, who should I see a walking along the Hammersmith road, but your friend, Miss Graham!"

"What, Agnes?"

"Yes, and no mistake. I shouldn't have seen her, if I hadn't accidentally have looked back; and I could hardly believe my precious eyesight. Well, of course I pulled up, and she didn't know me from Adam. And how should she? 'What,' says I, 'don't you know that young scamp as put you all in such a fluster with the serpent at the major's?' I never told you, Miss Georgina, how I did that. My eyes!—wasn't it a lark?"

"No—never mind that. Pray go on," said Georgina, impatiently.

"Nor how I served out your Pa? I told you I would, you know. That *was* a precious bit of fun! I can see the old boy kicking now—and then——"

"Now, pray tell me about Agnes, and never mind any thing else," interrupted Georgina, anxiously.



"Well, of course she knew who I was then; and she said her mother had quarrelled with her, and she had left home that morning, and intended to come to town by the stage, and look for employment. But when she got to the stage, she had forgot to bring her money; and so, sooner than go back, for fear of meeting her mother, she had set off to walk to town. But, poor thing! she was in a nice way; for her feet were so blistered, that she couldn't have walked another mile, to save her life. Well, I made her take what money I had; because, I told her, she could give it me back when she got her things up; for she didn't like to take it—which was nonsense; and she got into a stage, which put her down close by the place she was going to."

"And where was that?" hastily inquired Georgina.

"At a place called Shepherd's Market—up a street that leads out of Piccadilly."

"I'll go and see her, instantly," said Georgina, forgetting time and space, in her anxiety about her old friend.

"Now don't be in such a hurry," said the young government functionary; "hear what I've got to say. You see, Miss Agnes lives, for the present, with the wife of that man Hunsman, who manages her mother's affairs up at Beverley House; and she wants to take in needle-work, but they won't let her; and are just as civil to her as if she was a queen. But, as I go there every day, and am best part of my time there—for I've left the post-office service—soon got tired of that—I've found out that some plot is hatching between Hunsman and a man called Jeffries, to get her some property that she has been robbed of. But, after all, what I wanted more particularly to say to you was this, that she is always crying, day and night, and nothing seems to pacify her; and Hunsman's wife told me, in confidence, that it's about some gentleman that paid his addresses to her, and broke off about something your Pa told him. She said she had seen a letter that told her as much. Well, one day I said to Miss Agnes, that if Mr. Hopwood had said any thing against her that wasn't right, why couldn't she make him explain? She was surprised how I could know what it was that troubled her; but I didn't choose to tell her that. However, she said she could never think of doing such a thing, because of you, Miss Georgina;—afraid, I suppose, of hurting your feelings, by saying your Pa had told a

story about her. Now, you see, I thought that was carrying the thing a bit too far; and so, without saying a word to her, I came down here to see you, and try if you could not do something to put this matter to rights."

Georgina was greatly agitated during this recital; her color came and went at every phrase; and, before the lad had ceased speaking, she had quite made up her mind what to do. It seemed that a few months had changed Georgina from a romping, thoughtless girl, to a reflecting, firm-minded woman; for what she would have feared to think of a short time back, she now adopted without the smallest hesitation.

"If I go to London, and see Agnes, can you accompany me?" she asked, after a moment's pause.

"To be sure I can—what's to hinder me?" said the youth. "I've promised my brother, at Woolwich, to go and stay with him till uncle comes back; but I need not go for a day or two. You remember my brother, the cadet, don't you?—he expects a commission every day. He did ask such a lot about you—and he says he shall come down here in the summer. But I told him that was no use; for all the talk about here was, that you were going to marry a lord! You should have seen him—my eyes!"

"What conveyance can we get?" asked Georgina, without heeding the young gentleman's latter communication.

"I'll bring a post-chaise with me from town to-morrow, if you like," said he.

"No I must go to day—I will not sleep till I see her."

"Well, I'll step to Egham, and get a fly," suggested Mr. Hervey, junior. "I can easily say it's for a lady up the Green, who will walk to meet it. The man won't know you, because you never go out;—it isn't your pa's 'system;'—so uncle used to say." And the young wag chuckled at the notion.

Georgina thought his plan good, and promised to meet him on the road in half an hour.

"But, I say, Miss Georgina," said he, just as he was about to hurry away, "I'm thinking, on second thoughts, that you had better not go."

"Not go!" said Georgina impatiently; "why not?"

"Why, you see," said he, seriously, "how will it tell with your pa's 'system?'" and he ran out at the gate,

with a broad grin on his face, as though he had blown up the old arbor with a sky-rocket.

Georgina returned within, and found her mother busy with the pickles and preserves, in her store-room, re-covering such of the pots as were mouldy, and performing a variety of little offices, which a good house-wife knows to be of the last importance in domestic economy. Satisfied, therefore, that her mother had some hours' occupation, and that her father was not expected back till five o'clock, Georgina wrote a note, stating that she was gone for a ride, and should be back before dark, and left it upon her dressing-table, after the usual fashion of elopements. She then possessed herself of cloak and bonnet, and, by the egress of the garden-gate, shortly joined her young attendant, who was punctual with the 'fly,' and they proceeded, at a brisk pace, for London.

## CHAPTER XVI.

"To vouch this, is no proof,  
Without more certain and more overt tests."

CAPTAIN Bouverie had sought a few hours' repose, after the anxious and fatiguing duties he had just performed; for since the fatal affair of the preceding morning, he had not closed his eyes. It was vainly, however, that he courted sleep:—the whirl of the travelling carriage was yet in his ears, and the distressing scenes he had witnessed, were too vividly impressed on his mind to admit at present of repose. It was nearly three o'clock, and Captain Bouverie, weary and unrefreshed, descended into his private sitting-room, and began to busy himself with some papers, when two strangers were announced. On their entrance he was greeted by the smirking and self-confident visage of Mr. Jack Jeffries, and the more subdued and stolid physiognomy of his confederate, Mr. Jabez Hunsman. Captain Bouverie had not the slightest recollection of either of his visitors, and their appearance was something to create surprise as to the object of their call.

Jeffries advanced, hat in hand, with his usual air of easy assurance, and pulling to a more conspicuous elevation the clean collar which his rusty black stock had nearly extinguished, commenced as follows:

"I presume, Captain Bouverie, you do not remember me."

"I really do not, sir," was the captain's laconic reply.

"I am the confidential clerk of Mr. Robinson, solicitor, of Jermyn-street."

"Oh! take a seat, sir," said Captain Bouverie, eyeing him more closely.

"And this other gentleman, sir, is Mr. Hunsman, con-

fidential adviser to Mrs. Maxwell of Englefield Green," continued Mr. Jeffries; and Jabez, at this introduction, made an attempt at a spurious bow. Captain Bouverie glanced at him, and motioned him to a chair.

"I suppose you bring me that 100*l*. I was defrauded of at your employer's office some little time since," said Captain Bouverie to Jeffries.

"Why, sir—no, sir—not exactly *that*," simpered the confidential clerk, who thought the notion truly facetious.

"Why the gen'l<sup>e</sup>man aint so *much* out neither, Jack," interposed Mr. Hunsman.—"Why, you see, sir," and Jeffries edged himself forward on his chair to the utmost verge, and bending forward, till he made the space between himself and the gentleman he addressed decrease to an almost confidential point—"Why, you see, sir," said Mr. John Jeffries, "that our business is of a very private and particular nature; and although we do not bring you the money actually back, yet from what we can tell you concerning it, the parties may be made to refund the money. It's what a lawyer doesn't like, sir; but I know that as will make him."

"Do you mean to say, that Mr. Robinson was a party to that fraud upon me, knowing it to be such?" asked Captain Bouverie, seriously.

"Why, Lord bless *you*, sir, you seems as innocent as a babby in them matters; you don't know half that cove's rigs," broke forth Mr. Hunsman; but his victory was cut short by a severe sign from his companion.

"I believe I did not say *that*, sir," said Jeffries, bowing with a reserved and professional air; what I said, sir, was—that I knew that as would make him refund. You see, sir, there is a great legal difference between a man refunding money, and acknowledging himself a *particeps criminis* in the obtainment thereof."

"Well, sir, you must be a little more communicative on the subject of your visit to me, before I can say anything in the matter," said Captain Bouverie.

"Why don't you up and tell the gen'l<sup>e</sup>man at once, Jack?" suggested the straight-forward Mr. Hunsman:—"what's the use of beating about the bush?"

"If I am not competent, perhaps you will conduct the case yourself, Mr. Hunsman," observed the offended man of law.

"I did not say so, Jack," growled Jabez; "only I

thought the gen'leman would like to hear the upshot on it."

"If you have anything to say to me, I shall be obliged by your losing no time," said Captain Bouverie, "as I have much to occupy me."

"Why then, sir, I will be plain with you," resumed Mr. Jeffries, with his former placidity and professional air. "I consider myself an injured man. I have served Mr. Robinson for many years, and have conducted his most important cases with honor and profit; and when, as in duty bound to my wife and family, I had to practise for myself and did not succeed, and was obliged to return to him, he has never been the man to say—Mr. Jeffries, what's past is past, and we'll be the same as before. No, sir; I've been a marked man ever since. Take my word, sir, Mr. Robinson is a bad man. It is true he can insinuate himself."

"You *said* insinuate," interrupted Mr. Hunsman. "Yes; I'm blowed if he can't. He's as insinivating as a cork-screw. Just let him get the pint of his toe in, and you'll see if he won't wheedle in his whole carcass; and more nor that—if arter he don't draw you—but my eyes!—he's a rum 'un, and no mistake." And Mr. Hunsman closed this elegant episode in the proceedings, by drawing his finger briskly along the interior of his cheek, and ejecting from his mouth a sound like the report of a pocket-pistol, intended, doubtless, as a playful illustration of his foregoing image.

The Captain looked impatiently at one and the other of his visitors, and seemed as though undecided, whether or not he should ring the bell, and order them both out; but Mr. Jeffries again took up the case.

"You see, sir," said that worthy expounder of the intricacies of the law, "that my friend Mr. Hunsman is a plain blunt man, and you will excuse him."

Here Jabez was about again to interpose, but was checked by his friend's extended hand, as though he besought his silence.

"What I wished to convey to you was, merely a few facts relating to Mr. Robinson, and to show cause to you, why such facts are worth your notice."

"Well, sir, if you really have anything to say, which concerns me, pray be explicit," said Captain Bouverie impatiently.

"That is just what I was coming to, sir," urged the man of law. "I have said that Mr. Robinson is a bad man, sir."

"Oh! aint he?" ejaculated Hunsman.

"A very bad man, sir," continued Mr. Jeffries; "and I cannot shut my eyes to his mal-practices."

"Nor your ears, neither Jack!" again interposed the waggish Jabez.

"I have gone on, sir, as a faithful servant for many years," proceeded Mr. Jeffries; "I have endeavored to hide many things as I've been ashamed of; but, sir, I have such a thing as a conscience."

Here Mr. Hunsman directed a peculiar glance at his companion, which had almost the effect of overturning his gravity.

"Yes, sir;—a conscience!" he repeated, with an emphasis as strong, as the asseveration was startling; "and I cannot bear to go on year after year, lending myself to these things which I, in my own practice, wouldn't do on no account."

"But what have these things to do with me, sir?" asked Captain Bouverie.

"I'm just going to tell you, sir.—"

"It a'int no manner of use a interruptin him," said Mr. Hunsman, as it were in parenthesis; "Jack's like the ould pinsioner at Greenwich; he must have his own way a telling a story, and none other wont suit him."

"I was about to say," resumed Jack, treating with dignified disregard his friend's irregularity, "that one can't go on for ever in these ways, and that I and Mr. Hunsman knowing a good deal more than others wish, are determined to have justice done to people that you know of, Captain Bouverie. Now the long and the short of the business is this;—if we can recover property for a person that you know, who has been wronged of it, and, for doing a matter of pure justice, lose our places, don't you think we ought to be handsomely rewarded?"

"Are you quite certain it is in your power to procure the restitution of property unjustly obtained from some friend of mine?" asked Captain Bouverie.

"Just as sure as a sack-bag holds four and twenty hares, and no mistake about that neither," answered Mr. Hunsman.

"I believe I may promise you, without the chance of

failure, if we can agree upon terms," replied Jeffries, pressing Mr. Hunsman's remark.

"Well, I can only advise with my friend, if you will inform me who he is," returned Captain Bouverie. "Of course I can agree to nothing in which I am not a principal."

"But in this business you are a principal, sir," retorted Jeffries; "at least as good as a principal; and I'll tell you how. You see, sir, if you don't take this business in hand, nobody else will; and as I understood that you have a respect for the young lady, why, I don't think you would be the gentleman to let her go to the wall, for want of a little support."

"Assuredly not, if I can interfere properly. But say at once what you expect of me, and who the person is, whose interest I am to charge myself with," said the captain.

"As to what we expect, sir, it is simply this; to pay us for the loss of our places, for serving your friend's cause," said Mr. Jeffries.

"Them's the very terms, Jack. You've spoke like an angel at last,"—interposed his friend, with a hearty application of the palm of his hand to his thigh.

"That is just," said the captain, replying to Jeffries. "But what do you value your places at? and what is the value of the property you propose to recover?"

"Ah! that's the pint!" cried Mr. Hunsman: "now that's what I call talking sensible like."

"The property, sir, was valued at five thousand pounds and upwards," replied Jeffries, to the Captain; "and was given by a dying nobleman to an illegitimate child. The deed was destroyed, and another substituted by the trustee, in favor of himself; and the mother was a party to it, and I was a witness—a concealed witness—to the transaction, from the commencement to the end!"

"Now what do you expect, if you are able to bring all this home to the guilty parties?" asked Captain Bouverie.

"Why, sir, should you think five or six hundred pounds too much?" said Jeffries; "just to start us in life, when we are out of bread."

"No; not a penny too much," said the captain, "as you were no parties to the fraud; and I presume your knowledge of it was not of your own seeking."

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"It just was," cried Mr. Hunsman; "it was all of Jack's sharpness, and that's the same thing."

"But you have forgotten to inform me of the name of the party," said Captain Bouverie.

"Miss Agnes Graham," said Jeffries.

"Miss Agnes Graham!" repeated Captain Bouverie, astonished.

"Yes, sir; that's the young lady that's been robbed out of her property by Mr. Robinson, and her own mother—Mrs. Maxwell."

"You astonish me, indeed," said Captain Bouverie. "But since I left Egham, my acquaintance has entirely ceased with that young lady; and living as she is, with her mother, I do not see with what propriety any other person can interfere."

"Oh! I can put you to rights there," said Mr. Hunsman; "cos you see, the child isn't living with her mother no longer; she's living with me, leastways with my wife, which in course is the same thing."

"With your wife!" repeated Captain Bouverie.

"Why, Captain, I know how the cat jumps, as well as him as made it," continued Mr. Hunsman. "I must tell you, that the babby was brought up with me, and never was taken no notice on whatsoever, by her faggot of a mother, till she had the money left her; and then there was a scramble for it. But that isn't what I was a going to say, was this, and no mistake—that the poor babby was turned out of her mother's house because she kept company along with you. That night we came and caught you there, captain, my eyes and limbs, how the old tartar did go on, seeing as how she intended to pitch it into you for 600*£*, and that just spoilt her game. Well, the next morning, the poor babby was obliged to brush; and when your note was given to her, captain, I knowed it were your'n, cos I looked over and saw it, I thought for sure her poor little heart would a burst out of her bussum; and I'd take my dayy that the ould fox down at Egham had been asaying summut as he had no law for. Howsomer, I told her to go to my wife, till something could be done; cos my loaf, though no great things, were better nor no loaf at all, mind ye; and she, a poor, unprotected young creatur beside; and though I say it, a better hearted babby, nor a more innocenter, doesn't live in the three

kingdoms. But she shall have a crust as long as I've got one, come what will, and no mistake."

Mr. Hunsman had worked himself, towards the conclusion of this harangue, to such an unwonted point of enthusiasm, that in his anxiety to impose upon Captain Bouverie, that his sentiments towards Miss Graham were purely disinterested, he had almost succeeded in imposing upon himself, and fancied at that moment, that he entertained for the young lady of whom he had been speaking, a feeling of kindness and compassion—a weakness which Mr. Jabez Hunsman, during his long and chequered career, had never once been accused.

The sagacious Mr. Jeffries could not help admiring his friend's tact; and finding that sentiment was likely to be the order of the day (for Captain Bouverie was looking at that moment like a living edition of "Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy,") he observed—"My friend Mr. Hunsman, sir, has a most sincere respect for the young lady, and many a time have we talked over this matter. But then the poor young lady has had no friends, but such as could not help her. If I had been better off in the world, I would have had the affair up long ago, for the sake of justice. But there is a paramount duty upon every man—the duty he owes his wife and family."

A significant look from Mr. Hunsman, recalled the speaker from the flight which he was about to essay; and Jeffries, knowing his friend's eccentric impatience upon the peculiar subject upon which he had touched, wisely avoided the risk of collision.

Much of this by-play was however lost upon Captain Bouverie, whose mind was at that moment entirely engrossed with his own reflections. The name of Agnes Graham had given rise to most painful recollections. It cannot be supposed that when Captain Bouverie had deemed it a duty he owed himself, to take leave of that young lady, he could at once dismiss her from his mind. On the contrary, he had thought of her long, and bitterly bewailed the want of maternal care which had betrayed into irregularities a naturally virtuous mind. Indeed, so great was his regard for her, that he would have sacrificed much of prejudice for her sake, could he have remained sure of her individual worthiness. But Mr. Hopwood's unequivocal statement forbade him to deceive himself. From no other source would Captain Bouverie have taken

so abrupt a determination. Could he have found any reasonable doubt, he would have investigated the report; but he could not doubt the evidence of Mr. Hopwood's senses. And yet such is the uncertain nature of our judgment, when biassed by feeling, that although Captain Bouverie felt morally strong in his decision, he could not divest himself of a certain qualm, arising from an undefined and vague presentiment of having acted hastily. This feeling arose principally from the rough homespun speech of Hunsman. He had known her from a child—he had delivered a strong and fervent opinion of her excellence, couched as it was in homely guise—an opinion which coincided well with the secret feelings of his heart.

It seems a fault in our common nature, to give an individual credit for just so much honesty of purpose as the surliness and selfishness of his nature enables him to assume of roughness or bluntness of manner and speech; and by this ingenious process of reasoning, Mr. Jabez Hunsman became, in the estimation of Captain Bouverie, a worthy honest man, and the disinterested, though humble friend, of an unprotected girl; whilst Jack Jeffries, simply by association, stood in the light of one whose virtues were struggling with poverty.

"Well, sir," said Captain Bouverie, at length to Hunsman; "I have no objection to investigate this business a little closer—it seems a singular affair—that is, if Miss Graham consents that I should act for her."

"Oh! won't she though?" interrupted the courteous Jabez. "Why, the poor babby's done nothing but cry over that 'ere bit o' paper you sent her, till her face is no bigger than a ha'porth o' cheese stuck edgeways! Yes, I b'lieve you, she will consent, and no mistake."

"When will you like to enter into the case, sir?" asked Mr. Jeffries, who was not one of those who allowed himself to be in the back-ground long; "because my papers are all ready at my lodgings. I've been at great pains to make every thing so clear, that no doubt can exist of success, if my plans are followed."

"Oh! nobody won't doubt you, Jack, on a pint of law," returned Mr. Hunsman—"you're the 'cutest chap as I know on, by chalks."

"Well, suppose you both call on me this evening, about ten o'clock, as I shall be engaged till that time,"

said Captain Bouverie; "we will then go into the business fully, and adopt a plan of action."

"I've got one ready, sir," answered Jeffries; "I've had time enough to think over it, and will stake my professional reputation on its soundness."

"Very well, then come to-night. Good day to you—good day," returned the Captain, as the professional gentleman and his companion were taking their leave; but their departure was for a moment delayed, by the announcement of another visitor. It was no other than the young scapegrace who had made his morning visit to Georgina at Egham, which has been already recorded.

"What! young sky-rocket! what do you do here?" whispered Hunsman, who was at the door as the young gentleman entered.

"All right, Mr. Hunsman," returned the other, showing him a neat three-cornered note, and then advancing directly towards Captain Bouverie.

"I say, Jack!" said the wary Jabez to his friend, when outside the apartment—"what lark has that young penn'orth o' gunpowder got afoot? I had better wait and see he's playing us no tricks."

"No, no, there's no danger of that; come along, we've got a good deal to do;" and away went the confederate worthies, to mature their plans.

In the mean time, the note had been delivered and read. It was as follows:—

"Miss Hopwood will feel obliged if Mr. Bouverie will favor her with a call. She having something of importance to communicate to him. The bearer is Major Caisson's nephew."

"Miss Hopwood!" exclaimed Captain Bouverie, with the utmost surprise:—"is she in town alone?"

"She is," returned young Mr. Hervey; "and she comes to town only to speak to you, and is going back directly. Her Pa knows nothing about it. My eyes, won't he kick up a shindy about 'the system.'"

Captain Bouverie speedily equipped himself, and accompanied by the young amateur in combustibles, left the hotel.

Under the guidance of his young companion, he quickly found himself at Shepherd's Market, the locality chosen by Mr. Hunsman's better and larger half, to beguile her comparative state of widowhood; the much

greater portion of her husband's time being devoted to his mistress, and the responsible duties of his situation in her household. Captain Bouverie followed his youthful guide up two flights of narrow stairs, in one of the small houses of that humble quarter, and was then, without further ceremony, introduced into a front room, where a young lady was seated alone, whom at a glance he recognised as Miss Georgina Hopwood.

She rose to receive him as he entered, and welcomed him with great politeness, quite free from the embarrassment she once experienced in his presence. Her countenance was much paler than usual, and her demeanor staid and reserved, and it seemed to Captain Bouverie, that during the comparatively short interval which had elapsed since he beheld her a blushing girl at her father's house, a marked change was visible in her manner and appearance, even as though years had passed over her since that period.

"You will doubtless, Captain Bouverie, consider my conduct, to say the least, singular," commenced Georgina; "to request an interview with you, and away from my father's house. But I have learnt so much since this morning, that I deem it a duty I owe to a dear and injured friend, as well as justice to my own feelings, to take this step."

Captain Bouverie bowed, and awaited her further communication.

"I came to town, sir, expressly to see my friend, and early school-fellow, Miss Graham," resumed Georgina, in a firmer voice. "I heard she was obliged to quit her home; but I had no opportunity of hearing where she had removed, until the youth whom I sent to you, came to Egham this morning and informed me. From Agnes herself I have obtained a knowledge of all that has occurred to her since we last met, but more particularly, Captain Bouverie, of one circumstance in which you are interested, and which is the reason of my present communication."

"If you allude, Miss Hopwood, to the note I conceived it my duty to write Miss Graham," said Captain Bouverie; "be assured it was dictated from no caprice, but from the accidental knowledge of a circumstance, of a sufficiently grave character to justify me in the course I adopted; and I do not hesitate to tell you, Miss Hop-

wood, that it cost me a struggle—a painful struggle. But you will see yourself, I could not do otherwise, when I inform you, that it was from your own father, Miss Hopwood, whose word I could not doubt, that I heard the facts which determined me.”

“I know it all, Captain Bouverie,” returned Georgina; “and I beg to assure you, that my father when he related a circumstance to you, to the disparagement of Agnes, labored under a gross mistake. He little thought it was his own daughter who deserved that censure, and not the innocent girl who has suffered so much from it.”

“How! Miss Hopwood,” exclaimed Captain Bouverie earnestly:—“pray explain—if I have been in error—if I have wronged my poor Agnes, even unintentionally—I shall never forgive myself.”

“Yes, sir, it was I, upon whom the entire blame of that unfortunate business must fall,” resumed Georgina. “I call it unfortunate, from its consequence; but such a simple, unpremeditated act of folly, hardly deserves so very serious a visitation.”

Georgina then related to Captain Bouverie the circumstance of Mr. Hervey seeking her in the garden; of being surprised by Agnes on her return from Major Caisson’s; of bolting the garden gate upon the young cadet; and of Agnes and the cadet being surprised by Mr. Hopwood and the major, in that equivocal situation.

Great was the astonishment of Captain Bouverie, to hear so simple a solution of a circumstance which had involved such consequences; and he hardly knew which to admire most, the patience and endurance of Agnes under an undeserved stigma, which regard for the feelings of Georgina alone prevented her from explaining, or of Georgina herself, in thus frankly acknowledging, and drawing upon herself all the misconstruction which such a confession might create.

“You are a noble-minded girl!” exclaimed Captain Bouverie, after a slight pause:—“and now, having done so much for your friend Agnes, may I entreat a kind favor at your hands?”

“Name it, sir,” said Georgina; “what little I have the power to do, you may command.”

“To make my peace with Agnes, by informing her of what has passed, and telling her —”

“Nay, it will come with much better grace from your-

self," interrupted Georgina; "and you need not wait long for her forgiveness, for she never could withhold it from any body for five minutes."

"And where shall I see Agnes, that I may at once acknowledge my error," asked Captain Bouverie.

"Here, in this apartment; and immediately, if you please," replied Georgina; "for she is in the next room;"—and without waiting a reply, she left Captain Bouverie, returning, however, after the lapse of a few seconds, accompanied by Agnes.

Captain Bouverie flew to meet her, and possessing himself of both her hands, began to stammer forth such inarticulate phrases as the excited state of his feelings would allow him.

"There—there," interrupted Georgina; "say no more, I have already said enough for you. All you have to do now is to be happy:"—and she took one of the hands of Agnes, and pressed it between her own. "Let what is past be forgotten," she continued; "think only of the future;" and returning the hand she held, to that of the captain, she added—"appreciate her good qualities, Captain Bouverie. I know you will. Think of her as she deserves; you cannot think of her too highly. For me," and her voice faltered, "it matters but little; I shall at all events see you happy, dear Agnes:" and as she tenderly kissed her, Agnes felt her friend's warm tears trickle down her cheek.

"But why are you so sad, dear Georgina!" asked Agnes.

"I'm sure I do not know," replied Georgina, drying her eyes. "I ought not to be sad. But God bless you; I must return home; I do not know what my parents will say. Farewell, Captain Bouverie! think of me as a friend. Farewell, Agnes; you will hear of me soon again."

Captain Bouverie accompanied her to the conveyance which had brought her to town, and which was now in attendance; and at her earnest request she then resigned herself to the care of her young companion, with whom she started at a brisk pace towards home.

During Georgina's absence, the Hopwood household had been thrown into a state of inconceivable anxiety. She was not missed till dinner time; as it was not an unusual circumstance for her to study in her own room

for hours together. But when she was sought, and the note she left was brought to Mr. Hopwood, he became in a state of almost frantic terror. Some rash determination was attributed to her, from her conduct upon her father's disclosure of the morning; and Mrs. Hopwood upbraided her bewildered husband with the loss of their child, in his despotic attempts to force her inclination. Inquiries were made in every direction, but nothing was elicited; no chaise and four had been ordered; no gentleman of a suspicious appearance had been loitering about; in short, it was a mystery. Hopwood declared, if she ever returned, she should marry whom she pleased—he would give up all his darling projects, could he but see his daughter again; and Mrs. Hopwood declared her belief, that her poor child had broken her heart, in her struggle against her father's tyranny, and that he might never expect to see her any more;—for she dreamt of clean linen the night before, which was always a sign of death.

It was in the midst of this turmoil of tears and lamentation, that the "fly" drove up to the gate, and in another moment, the sight of Georgina gladdened the eyes of the bereaved couple. She was instantly in their arms, and their joy was too great to admit of reproach.

Mrs. Hopwood muttered something about "fears of Waterloo-bridge," and Mr. Hopwood stole a glance, to see whether some "tall gentleman" might not have entered the room, to whom he was to be introduced as his future son-in-law. But no—he only saw young scapegrace standing at a respectable distance, about whom he did not care to ask.

"But, my dear child," said Hopwood, after the first emotions had passed—"what could tempt you to leave your father—your mother—your home?"

"Hush!" papa, said Georgina, kissing him, and stopping his mouth playfully with her hand; "my head aches, and I am tired; and if you will promise not to say another word, and leave me to tell you at my own time, why—" she whispered in his ear, "I will marry Lord Walgrave!"



## CHAPTER XVII.

"I like not that paying back."

Mr. ROBINSON's usual morning attendance at his offices in Jermyn Street was ten o'clock; and punctually as the clock struck, on the morning succeeding the events of the last chapter, did that respectable practitioner arrive.

Jeffries was of course already at his desk; and Mr. Robinson passing on to his own private room, the door of which he opened with his Bramah key, was soon busied with papers and parchments that were awaiting his serious consideration.

A short time only elapsed, when a very slight rap aroused Mr. Jeffries, who, on opening the door, was greeted by his friend, Mr. Hunsman. The friends consulted together a short time in an under tone, during which Mrs. Maxwell's man of business showed the confidential clerk a note; when Jeffries, apparently satisfied, resumed his seat, and motioned his friend Jabez to a chair. Mr. Jeffries was shortly afterwards summoned by his employer into the inner office.

"Well, Mr. Jeffries," said the smooth tongued solicitor, "and how stands that matter of Howell and Snooks?"

"Just where it did, sir," answered Jeffries.

"Indeed! what is the reason you have not proceeded in it?" asked Mr. Robinson.

"Why sir, I have had some business of my own lately, which has completely occupied me," replied Jeffries pertly.

"Mr Jeffries, you must understand that my business must be first attended to; my clients must not be neglected, sir;" said the solicitor, sharply. "Go, sir and set

about it immediately—and let me hear no more of your business.”

“Why, sir, I’m sorry to be disagreeable,” continued Jeffries; “but I must trouble you a good deal more with my business. I want to have a little private conversation with you, sir.”

“Private conversation, eh?” said Mr. Robinson. “Well, Mr. Jeffries, certainly; you can consult me to-morrow morning;—yes, I can give you half an hour to-morrow morning.”

“To-morrow morning, sir, will be too late,” answered Jeffries; “I must tell you, sir, it concerns yourself, as well as me and others.”

“Indeed!” said Mr. Robinson looking at his clerk, inquiringly. “I did not know we had any business in common, Mr. Jeffries; but since it seems we have, pray state your case.”

“Well, then, sir, to commence,” said Jeffries, taking a seat, and placing his elbow on the table with an ominous familiarity; “there is one duty which a man has to perform, which is paramount to all others—yes,” repeated the clerk, in the same strain he generally used when contemplating any unequivocal dealing—“paramount to all others, sir;—I mean the duty a man owes to his wife and family!”

“Clearly, Mr. Jeffries; clearly so,” said the solicitor; the clerk’s feeling exordium touching the sympathetic chord in his breast—wife of his bosom—pledges of affection—and so forth. “Yes, Mr. Jeffries; yes;—a man must look to his family:—proceed.”

“Why, sir, I’ve been thinking,” continued Mr. Jeffries; “I’ve been thinking, that I am growing old.”

“Old! old!” interrupted the solicitor; “no, no—not old—quite a young man; bless me! I consider myself young, Mr. Jeffries; you’re quite a lad, you are indeed;—but proceed.”

“People tell me different, sir,” resumed the clerk; “but what I was going to say is this; that it is time I made some provision for my family, and do it I must.”

“Well, that is all very laudable, and I trust you will, Mr. Jeffries,” answered his master; but I hope you have a better speculation than your last, eh, Mr. Jeffries? not that I regret your making the trial at my expense; young men must learn wisdom.”

"And they must learn honesty too, sir," added Mr. Jeffries.

"I did not mean to attach any unpleasant meaning to that little experiment of yours, Mr. Jeffries," said Mr. Robinson; "but however, I am happy if it has been of service to you in more than one way."

"It has sir," continued Jeffries, gravely; "it has taught me never to go into business, without capital; and my knowledge of other people's affairs, I find, sir, will enable me to procure it."

"Eh? It has once, Mr. Jeffries," said the solicitor; "but I think it will hardly serve your turn again!"

"I must be plain with you, sir," said Jeffries, assuming a confidence he was far from feeling, at the moment when he was about to draw so largely upon the solicitor's patience: "after his wife and family, a man's next duty is to the public, and I have the means, sir, of doing both."

"Very desirable, Mr. Jeffries, very desirable," said Mr. Robinson, fidgetting a little in his chair; "but pray how have I anything in common with this extensive line of duty which you propose to yourself?"

"And yet you have, if you did but know it," said Jeffries, with a sly smile. "Now, sir, I know very well that you never proposed an extensive line of duty which did not include your own interest: I know that, Mr. Robinson."

"Good God! sir," cried Robinson, enraged, "do you think my valuable time is to be wasted by listening to your impertinence? Go from the room, sir, instantly. You have been drinking this morning, as usual: you are drunk, Jeffries; quite drunk. I fear I cannot pass this over."

"I fear, indeed, you will hardly be able to get over the business I am about to open," exclaimed Jeffries, justly incensed at his employer's base insinuation; for Mr. Jeffries had only taken *two* glasses on that morning. "To be plain, sir, I mean that you have done one thing as will hang you, and I know it."

"Mr. Jeffries! what *do* you mean, sir?" exclaimed the solicitor, turning pale; "do you mean to extort money from me a second time, sir? beware!"

"No, no, not that," said Jeffries: "to have got money out of you once, is quite enough for one man to say. I intend now that others should take their turn; and I can

put them in a way of so doing. Stop!" cried the clerk authoritatively, observing Robinson was about to speak. "There was a certain deed of gift from a dying nobleman to his illegitimate child. I mean you to restore the property to the right owner. You are aware I know all."

"Restore the estate; I will die first!" cried Robinson, desperation striving with fear: "your knowledge, what will it avail with a jury? Look at my character, sir, and look at yours. Don't think to frighten me, sir; on that point I am strong."

"Not so strong as you fancy, sir," said Jeffries; "and as for dying, there are two ways of doing that—natural and artificial; and, if you don't mind, you'll have to do the latter, and give up the estate into the bargain."

"My good Jeffries," remarked Robinson, in a mollified tone, after a pause, "you are a strange man—a strange character, I might even say. What do you propose by all this? Let us understand each other. Perhaps I have not acted towards you so liberally as I ought to have done, or as your talents deserve; but I intended to have done so, I assure you."

"Gammon!" cried Jeffries. "I like a man to do as he ought at once."

"And so I will, Jeffries; so I will," said Robinson, soothingly. "My dear sir, only reflect: what duty are you performing to yourself or your family, by disclosing transactions of past years? For my part, my character cannot be permanently injured; but these things, when they come to be spoken about, awaken many unworthy suspicions, which a professional man should of all things avoid."

"You've brought it all upon yourself," said the clerk, rising. "You would not remunerate my talents as they deserved; you would not see my light under the bushel; you would not ——" and here Mr. Jeffries, finding himself at a loss for further illustration, opened the door, and beckoned Mr. Hunsman forward.

Jabez obeyed the summons with an alacrity which a hope of present proceeds commonly communicated to his movements.

"You know this gentleman, I believe?" inquired Jeffries, pointing to his friend, who endeavored suddenly to render himself worthy of the appellation, by accomplishing a profound bow.

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"Know him? gentleman?" cried Robinson vaguely.

"Gentleman? yes," exploded Hunsman, "and if I aint a gen'tleman, blow me if I think as there's one in the room. What say, Jack, am I wanted yet?"

"Is *that* gentleman come yet?" demanded Jeffries.

"What gentleman do you mean?" interposed Robinson. "I hope you have not imparted your present business to any living soul; surely, this man —"

"That's the honorablest title as you can bestow; I *am* a man," cried Hunsman, with dignity, "and that's what you aint. You're any thing but, and a little more. Yes, Jack," and he turned towards his friend, "the gentleman is come, and is now sitting in the office, on the tender hooks of impatience."

"You see, sir," cried Jeffries, addressing his master, "we stand no nonsense, now. Hunsman is my witness."

"Am I not?" cried Hunsman.

"And we have, after due deliberation, made known that precious swindle of yours to a gentleman, who is determined to see justice done to an unprotected female."

"To an innocent gal. Shame on ye; I'm surprised at you, Mr. Robinson," added Hunsman, in a tone of moral rebuke, to which the party addressed paid little attention, that gentleman being at the moment in a state of perplexity inconceivable.

"Come hither, Jeffries," cried Robinson faintly, as he was about to leave the office; "you do not intend—you cannot wish to betray me. Why had you not spoken to me before you took this rash step? Who is this gentleman?"

"You know him well enough," cried Jeffries, who, with all the meanness of a dastardly nature, exulted in the abasement of his master. "Pray walk in, Captain Bouverie; you will find Mr. Robinson quite alone."

Bouverie made his appearance at this moment, and silently motioned to the two friends to retire from the room.

"I am come, Mr. Robinson," said Bouverie, seating himself, and fixing his eyes mildly but firmly upon the face of the disconcerted solicitor, "I am come upon a most extraordinary and, so far as you yourself are concerned, a most unpleasant business."

"I heard, Captain Bouverie —" gasped Robinson.

"That worthy, conscientious man, your clerk, has pre-

pared you for this interview, I presume," said Bouverie. "Really, sir, this is a most painful business. I would wish, however, before I proceed further, to hear what you have to say upon it."

Robinson had, by this time, in part collected his scattered thoughts; and, with an instinct peculiar to a certain class of mankind, foresaw no better way of clearing his own character, than by attracting attention to the bad character of another. "That worthy, conscientious man, my clerk?" said he, with as much everyday manner as he could at the moment assume; "are you aware, sir, that he is one of the most notorious rascals in this town? that this is a conspiracy to extort money, Captain Bouverie? My dear sir, you are a very young man: I respect the warmth of feeling which impels you to undertake the cause of the oppressed—of those you fancy so: but you are mistaken, you are, I assure you. Young gentlemen must, after all, wait for experience."

"I have experience enough," answered Bouverie, slightly nettled at a remark which it is the fate of every young man to hear, "to know this, Mr. Robinson, that if your clerk be what you report of him, you derive no additional respectability from your employment of him. Be he what he may, he has told me so much, and has confirmed it by such evidence, as will justify me in prosecuting this affair forthwith."

"But, Captain Bouverie," expostulated Robinson, perplexed, "is the word—the solemn assurance—of a respectable man, like myself, to weigh nothing against the reckless assertions of a vindictive scoundrel, who would ruin me if he could?"

"Were it merely assertion," returned Bouverie, "your word would outweigh his undoubtedly, if he be what you represent him to be; but I have more than assertion to proceed upon—I have proof."

"Proof!" cried the solicitor, aghast.

"What I consider proof, I should say," resumed the captain, "At all events, this thing must be sifted to the bottom. In justice to yourself, I insist upon it. Nay, nay," he continued, "do not deprecate this step. I have had reason to believe you an honorable man, Mr. Robinson. You remember, doubtless, Let the world be fully apprised of it, lest there should be some mistake or doubt about it hereafter."

Mr. Robinson had looked foolish, but that his consternation was too great to admit of the manifestation of any minor emotion. He arose, and walked to the door of the office, which he opened stealthily, and having satisfied himself that neither Jeffries nor his companion, Hunsman, were listening, a frailty to which the former, as Robinson well knew, was especially prone, he silently returned to his seat.

"Well, Mr. Robinson," said Bouverie, after a long pause, taking out his watch; "my time is precious. I presume the business between us is for the present settled. I am now about to call upon my solicitor, to whom I beg to refer you in the further stages of this matter."

"Nay, nay, be not so hasty. Your military men are always so prompt, cried Robinson, insinuatingly. "I have been thinking, Captain Bouverie, how I can explain this affair to you; it was a most delicate one, I assure you;" and he sighed. "The late earl," he proceeded, "the father of the young lady in whom you appear so deeply interested, certainly did intend to leave a considerable sum to her, and directed me to frame a deed for that purpose."

"Aye?" said Captain Bouverie, anxiously.

"Yes—he did so, I confess—" continued the solicitor, "but—ah! sir these high folks are but poor hands at business—he wished me to frame such a deed as would leave the property to the exclusive management of the mother—one Mrs. Maxwell."

"Indeed!" cried the captain; "I was not aware. You remonstrated against it, of course?"

"The question implies a knowledge of her character," answered Robinson; "a bad, bad woman—a wicked woman, Captain Bouverie; but, sir, the earl was a man who would not bear remonstrance. I dared not do it—I could not. He was my patron—my friend—my best friend; I could not embitter his last moments by insinuating a doubt of Mrs. Maxwell's integrity."

"Proceed, Mr. Robinson," said Bouverie; "I am deeply interested. What then did you do? how did you act?"

"It was an honorable fraud!" cried Robinson, with animation; "I prepared the deed in my own favor—inserted my own name, instead of that of Miss Agnes Graham, and it was executed, and I hold that deed."

Bouverie was silent for some minutes. "I do not wish to raise needless doubts as to your statement, sir," he said, at length; "but I cannot conceive how your mere substitution of another name could deprive Mrs. Maxwell of the control of the money which, as I understood you, the earl intended to leave her, in trust for his daughter."

"Oh! my dear young gentleman," cried Robinson, "you do not understand these legal points."

"I do not," returned Bouverie, sternly; "but I mean to do so. If it be, as you say, sir, I cannot conceive why Mrs. Maxwell should have *connived* at this proceeding; unless, indeed, you offered, and she accepted, a consideration for unmaintaining secrecy."

Mr. Robinson's visage elongated considerably at the conclusion of this speech, and had he not been too absorbed in his own unhappy reflections, he might have heard an unmannerly titter that slid through the key-hole, and dissipated itself through the apartment.

"I must now leave you," said Bouverie, rising; "it is clear you are either unprepared, or unwilling to satisfy me. Be it so. Good morning, Mr. Robinson."

"Stay, for Heaven's sake, stay!" cried the solicitor, suddenly rising; a hope of escape from the utter ruin which a public disclosure of his villany would inevitably entail upon him, occurring to him.—"Stay, Captain Bouverie; a few words will suffice to convince you that I had no evil intentions in this affair, originally."

"I do not understand you, sir, cried Bouverie; "pray be explicit. I have wasted too much time already."

"Why," cried Robinson, who felt it necessary that he should emerge from the corner into which he had been driven, with as much grace as circumstances would permit—"it was always my intention, when Miss Graham arrived at a proper age, to pay the amount into her own hands—don't you see, sir? my sole design was to prevent the possibility of Mrs. Maxwell's making away with the property."

"Let us speak plainly," returned Bouverie; "it were idle for me to tell you, that I believe what you have just stated: however, it is not my wish to destroy your reputation with the world at large."

"Surely, surely," said Robinson, abjectly, "you could not desire to ruin me for a mere fault of the head, which



my concern for others led me to fall into. I have a heart Captain Bouverie."

"The value of the property was about 5000*l*. I think," said Bouverie, paying little attention to the startling fact that the solicitor had just announced; "rather more, I believe, than five."

"Oh dear! no," cried Robinson; "five? Lord bless me."

"And the interest upon that sum might be about five more. I shall let you off easily, sir; you must give me a cheque for 7000*l*."

Robinson looked like a baffled badger, when this proposition was made to him. To part with money was at all times "a sad thing, a very sad thing," to the solicitor; but to make restitution—to be compelled to make it—was what he could by no means understand. Mr. Robinson, in one sense, might indeed be said to *do* justice; but his miscellaneous reading had taught him to look upon her merely as a female, whose sole property consisted of a pair of scales, and who had the misfortune of being blind; a calamity with which our solicitor was hardly disposed to sympathise. In a word, had there really existed such a representative of the principle, situated as artists delight to represent her, Mr. Robinson would long ago have contrived to swindle her out of her scales.

We cannot pursue this conversation further. It were too humiliating to record the alternate threats and entreaties that proceeded from the solicitor, whilst he was engaged with his young and inexperienced, but straightforward and inflexible antagonist. He could not, and at length he felt he could not, evade the payment of a sum that brought his account at the bankers to a very low ebb, and the sudden deprivation of which knocked on the head sundry schemes that he had almost nursed to maturity.

Bouverie knew his man well enough to decline signing an acquittance from all further claims upon the solicitor, until he had got the cheque cashed; which, the bankers being close at hand, he effected in a few minutes—leaving the precious trio to indulge, in the interim, in their own reflections.

"Now that this great business is settled," cried Robinson, on Bouverie again entering the office, "so much to the satisfaction of all parties, it will not be too

much to request you, Captain Bouverie, to let it go no further. It cannot be advisable that it should do so."

"Mr. Robinson," cried Bouverie, placing the money in his pocket, "it is not my wish to injure you, but I must plainly tell you, that I shall make no scruple of informing certain friends of mine, with whom you are, or have been, connected, of the whole circumstances. Doubtless, the promptness with which, when called upon, you have made reparation, will be a strong point in your favor."

"But, my good, dear sir," remonstrated Robinson, "if I promise —"

Bouverie pointed to the door of the outer office. "Do you think, sir," he said, "were I to do as you desire, the gentlemen in the other room could be induced to hold their peace?"

"Oh, my God! I am ruined past redemption," groaned Robinson: "that villain Jeffries—after all I have done for him, too!"

"I know nothing of the villany of Mr. Jeffries," said Bouverie, "or of the extent of your kindness towards him. No, no, Mr. Robinson," and he arose—"gentlemen like you, before you do acts like these, should at least make up your mind to the possible contingency of their disclosure."

Bouverie, when he entered the outer office, found Messrs. Jeffries and Hunsman anxiously awaiting his arrival.

"I give you joy, captain," said Jeffries, with a low bow, "you have acted your part nobly."

"Like a trump, and no mistake," added Hunsman.

"Gentlemen," said Bouverie, "if you will call upon me to-morrow morning, we will settle our little business. To-morrow morning at eleven," he repeated with emphasis.

"Why, sir," and Jeffries coughed; an intimation to Hunsman, that his more winning and persuasive talents were to be brought into the field.

"Captain," said the orator, touching his hat, and leering from one eye seductively, "if you *could* say now—perwising it's all the same to you. We wants the blunt; we do, honor! They do say," he added, archly, "to-morrow's like the tenant as mizzled—never comes."

"It's awkward, certainly, for I am in great haste,"

cried Bouverie, anxiously: "not that you need detain me long. Where shall we go?"

"If you would coudescend," said Jeffries, overjoyed: "not a step—just round the corner—the Coach and Horses—excellent private room."

"And the best o' liquors," said Hunsman; "you can't call for nothing as isn't bang up to the mark. But, I knows you gen'lmen don't take it neat; leastways, very seldom."

Thither Bouverie followed the impatient expectants, and, as quickly as possible, placed in their hands the sum he had promised them; politely declining to take his share of a bottle of wine, which Mr. Jeffries offered "to stand Sam" for, and inwardly agreeing to the truth of the remark insinuated into his ear by Jabez, as he took his leave, that he would find Miss Agnes Graham "as wirtuous, and, he might say, as well conducted a creature, mind you, as ever eyes were clapt on; a young woman as knew herself, and hadn't no wices whatsoever."

In the meanwhile, Mr. Robinson had been left a prey to his own reflections, which, as they seldom spared anybody, were not more merciful even to himself. Rage, mortification, and fear, alternately chased each other through his breast, and were succeeded by other feelings, to which, as it falls but to the lot of few to experience them, so it has never occurred to the world to give them a name. It at last struck Mr. Robinson, that Mrs. Maxwell must have had a hand in this business. It is the fate of vice, that it can never feel secure in the employment of its agents or instruments; and Mr. Robinson, being one of those who never kept faith with another any longer than his own interest dictated the expediency of his so doing, naturally and reasonably concluded, that others might mete out the same measure to himself. He could not conceive but that Jeffries had been instigated to betray him by another; and that other, could only be Mrs. Maxwell; a conclusion greatly strengthened by the fact that Mr. Hunsman, her confidential servant, not only accompanied, but encouraged this base proceeding.

Mr. Robinson now remembered a certain bond in judgment, which Mrs. Maxwell had signed some time since—a document which gave him the power of seizing her furniture and effects; and of this, almost in a delirium of revenge, he resolved to avail himself. It was high time,

indeed, that he should close his connection with a person who had ceased to possess power to be of service to him; and between whom and himself, he was aware, there was but little disposition towards either friendship or esteem.

Fraught with this humane determination, but designing to pay a preparatory visit of the exploratory kind, to see how the land lay, as he termed it, (a caution characteristic of the solicitor,) he mounted the Egham stage, and was in due time set down a short distance from the mansion.

There was an unusual bustle in the hall when Mr. Robinson entered, that seemed to indicate something extraordinary. Servants were hurrying hither and thither; one door shut—two or three doors opened; a strange dog barked at the heels of two strange men, and the hall chairs and the barometer were gone.

Mr. Robinson with some difficulty succeeded in running down a footman, whom he caught firmly by the button. "What's the matter here?" cried he: "where is Mrs. Maxwell?"

"Mrs. Maxwell's wanted," cried the man, breaking away.

"Who wants Mrs. Maxwell?" cried a man issuing from behind: and Robinson recognised him as the cypher who usually answered to the name of Maxwell. That gentleman had been paying strict attention to the ale-barrel; and invigorated by his studies, was disposed to dispense with that troublesome reserve which upon other occasions beset him. "Oh, *you* are come, are you?" said he, advancing sinuously towards the solicitor; "you're not wanted here just now, I can tell you; so, you had better be packing."

"My dear Mr. Maxwell," exclaimed Robinson, "pray tell me what is the matter? Can I be of any service?"

"You haven't been of much service hitherto," hiccupped Maxwell; "I don't know whether you can be."

"Where's the lady?" demanded Robinson.

"You'd better not see the lady, as you call her," said Maxwell; "there's an execution in the house; they've taken away nearly all the traps, and I don't know whether they won't take her after them. Let us hope the best;"—and the affectionate husband chuckled.

"They couldn't do that, Mr. Maxwell," cried Robinson, whose professional habits caused him for a moment

to forget the matter in hand; "they might take you, as I think you know."

"Don't I?" said Maxwell, scratching his wig. "But I tell you, Robinson, as a friend, you had better not go near her just now. She read something in the paper this morning about a duel, and that upset her; and then the execution came in, and that capsized her; and now you are come, and that'll bother her; and we shall have the devil's own rumpus. She has been pegging away at the brandy-bottle all day, and if you say anything to put her out, she'll show fight I can tell you."

"God bless my soul!" cried Robinson, who saw at a glance the value of his bond in judgment reduced to twopence a pound—"God bless my soul!"

"Ah, so I say!" cried Maxwell: "I hope he will, but I'm afraid he won't. You needn't call here again, old boy: we shall leave in a few days."

At another time, Mr. Robinson would have vindicated his own dignity, and taught the vulgar fellow, and intoxicated beast, the immeasurable distance that subsisted between them; but, at the present moment, chagrin and disappointment were too busy within him to admit of such self-satisfying gratification. He merely muttered, therefore, his intention of waiting upon Mrs. Maxwell shortly, and returned towards the town in a state of misery known only to gentleman like Mr. Robinson.

Too much occupied with his own thoughts, Mr. Robinson was in no situation to remark a carriage which drove rapidly past him, containing Captain Bouverie and Agnes, and which stopped at Mr. Hopwood's door. Before the solicitor had concluded his dreary journey to town, explanations and congratulations had been exchanged between the happy parties congregated in Hopwood's parlor; and the anticipated happiness of his daughter, connected with the full developement of the blessed fruits of his "system," led the old gentleman into such extravagance of hilarity during the evening, that Georgina inwardly determined, never, by any froward or petulant disregard of his will, to place any obstacle in the way of his anxiously-expressed wishes;—a determination not a little strengthened by the certainty that she could not have the man she once preferred, and by a mental review of the qualities of her intended husband, which called upon her heart to "show cause" why she ought not to have preferred Lord Walgrave.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

“—— He raves, his words are loose  
As heaps of sand, and scattering wide from sense.”

It was about three weeks after the duel, that Vernon awoke as from a long and hideous dream. It was with some difficulty that he recognised where he was; and he was unable, for a considerable time, to recollect anything but circumstances that occurred years ago. Gradually, however, as by a painful effort, he enforced consciousness upon himself—his mind presented before him events of more recent date—until at length it rested upon the one dreadful act, beyond which he knew nothing. He started, and cast his eyes round the room.

A gentleman was seated on the sofa, reading. Vernon gazed at him long and earnestly. Could it be?—It must be, Moore. He repeated his name weakly, but with a clear emphasis.

Moore turned round incredulously, and approached him on tiptoe.

“Vernon,” said he, “surely you spoke.”

“I did—I did—you have been a good friend to me, Moore, I begin to feel that. Tell me—where is Laurence?—what has become of him?”

Moore, overjoyed as he was at this sudden and favorable change in his friend, was embarrassed by the question.

“You shall know all in good time,” he answered; “you must compose yourself now. Do you know that you have been ill for some weeks?”

“Here, was it not?” said Vernon, pointing to his head. “Yes—but I am well again now—too well. Have you attended me constantly?”

“No—but I have called often.”

"I thought so," pursued Vernon; "there were men about me, I think; and my sister Mary," he added, suddenly recollecting himself, "where is she? She left me some time since, did she not?"

"She did," said Moore; "and you shall see her soon. Do you feel strong enough to speak to her now?"

"Oh, yes."

"I will go and bring her then," said Moore, too glad of an opportunity to escape from a circumstantial account of all that had taken place since they left Hampstead, and which he began to fear Vernon was about to extort from him.

Moore returned in a few minutes, leading Miss Vernon.

"I will call again in the evening—good bye for the present, Vernon; good morning, madam," and he abruptly departed.

Miss Vernon walked slowly towards her brother. She was habited in deep mourning, and her face was coldly and almost unnaturally pale. Vernon scanned her for a moment, and then averted his eyes.

"I am glad to hear that you are better," said his sister, with seeming calmness.

"Oh! I am better," he returned, quickly; "I have been ill—mad, I suppose; but I am well once more. I feel a lightness that I cannot account for; I must not feel so. But tell me, how is Laurence?"

Miss Vernon had taken a chair while her brother was speaking, on the back of which she was leaning with her head upon her hand. She turned her face suddenly towards him, and looked at him, as if doubting whether her ears had not deceived her.

"You think me mad again—oh, no!" cried Vernon, with a faint smile. "Is he not dead?"

"He is, Horace Vernon."

"I thought so—I knew it—I heard it somewhere, but where I do not know. I have yet another question, Mary. Do not answer it in words. Your silence, if it be so, will be enough. I have dreamed, or—what was it?—something in my brain and in my heart, for a long time, that my sister Charlotte is also dead. She also is dead," he repeated. "You do not speak?"

"Oh, Horace, talk not so, for mercy's sake," said his sister, rising, and approaching him; "collect yourself—we will speak of it another time."

"But it is so," said Vernon, doggedly; "both dead! it is best—is it not best?"

"You know not how you distress me," said his sister, appealing to him, fearful that he would relapse into madness; "you must not think of it now."

"Of what else should I think?" said he, in surprise; "here is thought enough for one life, I should imagine. May I walk out?"

"Into the streets! by no means," said Miss Vernon, about to detain him.

"Into the streets?" said he, with a vague laugh; "how could you think so? What! I walk the streets! Murderers do not show themselves by daylight—they are too wise for that—no, no, that would not do."

Miss Vernon was in deep perplexity as to what course she should pursue. Afraid to summon the keepers, lest her brother should break out into violence, and undo all the good that had hitherto been effected, she was at the same time doubtful of the prudence of leaving him to himself.

"Will you walk in the garden?" she said, at length; "it is very small, you know, but the air may do you good."

"Yes, that is what I meant; I will walk there awhile."

When Vernon again entered the room, which was at the expiration of about an hour, he appeared more composed, but observed a deep silence, which his sister did not deem it advisable to break.

After dinner, however, he called for wine, but instantly understood the deprecating glance of Miss Vernon.

"True, true," he said, waving his hand, "I must not drink wine; it has made me mad once, and might do so again. I must take care not to go mad. Mary," he resumed, after a pause; "you did not tell me where they are buried?"

"In Hampstead church, together," said his sister, in a low tone.

"I can bear that—I can bear to be told that," cried Vernon, speaking rapidly. "I may know, but I must never see, where those creatures lie:—that must be kept off—away from me:" and he thrust his hands from him. "Oh, never—never—never, will I see where they are buried."

"You had best retire now," urged Miss Vernon in an

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almost inaudible voice; "you are fatigued—a short sleep will revive you."

"Oh, no; not a short sleep," cried Vernon, almost with a groan, and he clasped his head with his hands; "I would keep awake, till I die. It is sleep I dread. I must think, or I shall go back—mad—oh! mad——"

A strong convulsion shook his frame, and he appeared to be wrestling with some inward and almost irresistible emotion. His sister watched him in agonised silence; her hands stretched out before her, as fearing that he would momentarily drop to the ground. He looked up, and beheld her.

There was an expression in his sister's face that he had never seen before. Unable, as yet, altogether to comprehend that he was the cause of it, its piteous, heavenly tenderness was more than he could withstand. He arose and came towards her, and falling upon his knees, held up his hands beseechingly—"Oh! Mary Vernon! my sister, my only sister!"

Feelings, however we may succeed in repressing them for a time, will eventually wreak themselves upon us with an additional force and strength, which they derive from being so long pent in the bosom; or, if it be not literally true that they do so, it is certain that circumstances will arise, when the long-studied and almost habitual exterior of apathy is forgotten, and nature resumes her functions. It was so with Miss Vernon; who, whether from a morbid policy, or a mistaken pride, had for many years striven to conceal and to stifle feelings which, intense in their nature, often, when imprisoned in the breast, destroy

"More than are number'd in the lists of Fate."

But, schooled as she was in this most difficult species of self-denial, the sight of her brother, humbly, abjectly, at her feet, was more than she could bear. Her chest heaved—her hands were clenched together with a convulsive effort—a violent spasm arose in her throat, and, with a loud and piercing shriek, she fell senseless on the floor.

Vernon, as he knelt, gazed at her awhile in silent stupefaction. "What have I done? I have killed her also," he murmured. "What has brought you here?" he continued, starting to his feet, as two men burst into the

room, and he stood before them, as though to intercept their progress.

"Keep off!" said he, wildly. "Stand back! I have killed her—I shall murder you. You shall not touch her: send up the women!"

At this moment, the landlady and two female servants, who had followed the men into the room, came forward; and raising Miss Vernon from the ground, conveyed her to her own apartment.

The first definite idea which had entered the brain of Vernon when he emerged from the delirium in which, during the last three weeks, he had been plunged, was, that it was impossible he could be suffered to live; that it had been ordained that he must surely die; and that death, and the eternal rest which he believed awaited it, was the only blessing that now remained to him. It is doubtless, a direction of Providence, that no calamity, however great, can befall us, that the Almighty does not, in most cases, furnish us with some means of assuaging; and they who nominally deny the existence of an over-ruling Providence, are at all times ready to embrace the doctrine of an inexorable Fate—an unstable and uncomfortable doctrine, certainly, but one that is exceedingly convenient and agreeable to its adherents, who are thereby steeled against, and shielded from, the consequences of their own actions.

The state of half-consciousness in which Vernon had lain for some weeks, had deadened the shock which the tidings of Laurence's and his sister's death would otherwise have caused—a shock which might have lost him his reason for ever; and at this moment his bewildered faculties enabled him to view himself merely as an instrument, in the hands of fate, by whom it had been pre-determined that his whole family must be destroyed. He awaited, accordingly, almost with calmness, the intelligence of his sister's death, which he expected every moment to be brought to him.

Miss Vernon, however, when the first paroxysm had subsided, became more calm and collected; summoned her resolution to her aid; and, in a short time, returned to the room in which Vernon was seated, apparently as serene and tranquil as before.

Vernon beheld her with surprise. He arose to meet her. "Is it possible, Mary?" he said. "I thought ——"

His sister took his hand. "You must suffer yourself

to be ruled by me, Horace," she said. "You are, as yet, far from well. You must not think, now. Oh, my brother, never kneel again to me. There is One, to whom alone your prayers are due, and to Him you must not yet pray."

"To whom?" said Vernon, inquiringly. "Oh, I know, I know, Mary. You know I cannot pray to Him. Must not—must *not*. Never mention *that* more," and he turned away with a shudder. He came towards her again suddenly. "I have been mad," said he: "I am ~~aware~~ of it. I guess who those two men were, who rushed into the room some time since. Promise me this—that you will dismiss them."

"I will do so," answered his sister.

"That is well—that is excellent—I want their hideous services no longer. They would make me mad. Let them go back to Hampstead. I wish Moore would come. Oh, this brain of mine—it will wander!"

His sister was alarmed. "My dear Horace!" she began—

"No—no—it shall not. It is right again. I have but to think of one thing—that settles—fixes it."

The entrance of Moore soon after, considerably relieved Miss Vernon.

"I do not know whether I was right, madam," said Moore, "but I have brought a visitor to your brother. He would take no denial, and, I believe, has something private and particular to impart to him."

"I fear, sir," replied Miss Vernon in a suppressed tone, "that my brother is hardly yet in a condition to see any body; more especially if any excitement is likely to be the consequence. Is he an intimate friend?"

"Why, no," said Moore, "he is not; and yet his lordship was so pressing, being about to leave England for the continent, that I could not well decline bringing him."

"Of whom are you speaking?" said Vernon, approaching; "some body wishing to see me, I think, you said—who can he be? a friend of course; friends are always so attentive when a man's in distress."

"Lord Walgrave," said Moore whispering; "you remember Lord Walgrave, surely."

"I do so," cried Vernon, shaking his head, in a manner that, upon another occasion, might have been deemed comic; "I think I have reason to do so. What! he's

below, is he? Has he brought a pack in his pocket? Well, have at him, I say."

"By no means," cried Miss Vernon, interfering.

"I didn't mean it; I didn't mean it, you foolish woman," said Vernon lightly; "I have done with fortune—she may keep her wheel to herself, or turn it for others; I have done with her."

"My dear madam," said Moore, "I really believe his lordship has something of consequence to say to your brother—nothing of that kind, I'll be sworn. I will take care," he added lowering his voice; "that he shall not be excited. Will you come, Vernon?"

"May I?" said Vernon turning to his sister, "I will be very calm. Come along, and let us hear what this lord has to say."

"Now don't fluster yourself, my dear friend," said Moore, as they descended the stairs; "Walgrave is not the bad fellow you take him for."

"Lord bless you, Moore," cried Vernon; "I don't take him for a bad fellow—all right—a man of the world—fine person—elegant manners—so forth."

Lord Walgrave arose to meet them. There was an unaccustomed gravity in his demeanor and manners, as he extended his hand to Vernon—which the other, after a moment's delay, accepted; and it was almost with embarrassment that he apologised for troubling Vernon with his present visit, and uttered the ordinary regrets and sorrow common to such occasions.

A long silence ensued after the gentlemen had seated themselves; Lord Walgrave was the first to break it.

"Moore," said he, "you would do me a particular favor by withdrawing for a few minutes; I would rather, I confess, speak with Mr. Vernon alone."

"Would you?" said Moore; but he did not attempt to stir. "The fact is, Walgrave, I have given my word to Miss Vernon, that I would be present. You know," and he glanced at Walgrave, "he is yet rather unwell—nervous, and easily excited, and—"

"I cannot conceive, my lord," interrupted Vernon, in a tone perfectly free from the wildness which had before characterised it—"I cannot conceive what business you can possibly have with me, that Moore may not hear."

"It is merely a matter of feeling, and of my own feel-

ings," said Walgrave confused; "I would rather—but you are a gentleman, and a man of honor, Mr. Moore."

"My friends consider me so, and I am entirely of their opinion," said Moore.

"I hope to be included amongst them," said Walgrave. "Mr. Vernon, you no doubt remember the occasion on which I had the pleasure once of meeting you."

"I do," said Vernon, with some asperity; "the *pleasure* of meeting me! I believe the pleasure was entirely on one side, my lord."

Lord Walgrave colored, but observing a significant glance that proceeded from Moore, he resumed.

"I think, sir," he said, addressing Moore, "you will agree with me, that a man, having acquired certain vices, is not bound to keep them during his whole life."

"He is by no means bound to do so," answered Moore; "and I believe very few keep them on compulsion."

"True," replied Lord Walgrave, smiling faintly. "Mr. Vernon, you recollect that, upon that evening, I won from you a considerable, a *very* considerable sum of money."

Vernon arose hastily, and his eyes glared at the other wildly. He checked himself. "I *will* control myself," he said, and he reseated himself. "I do not understand your drift, sir. You did win money of me; was it paid?"

"Pardon me, Vernon," cried Walgrave earnestly; "I came not here to offend you. It *was* paid, and honorably. I can hardly explain," he added, with some reluctance. "Mr. Moore, I beseech *you*, at least, to enter into my feelings, when I say, I cannot reconcile it to them *now*, to retain more than a portion of that money. Do you understand me?"

"Confound me if I shall speak truth if I say I do," answered Moore.

"It is humiliating—very humiliating," said Walgrave; "I know it; but I have no alternative. Here, Mr. Vernon," and he handed him a packet, "I return you ten thousand pounds; you will find that sum there. I should have returned it before, but was unable to do so."

Vernon burst forth into vociferous laughter.

"Moore," he cried, "you know that I have been mad—yes, I have been mad, Lord Walgrave—but upon my soul, there are two of us—ha! ha! I shan't take it," he continued gravely.

Walgrave was about to make an appeal to Moore. "I do understand you now," said the latter. Walgrave cast his eyes to the ground; whilst Moore caught his hand, and shook it warmly.

"I hope, Moore," cried his lordship, "you will prevail upon your friend ——"

"I will," replied Moore. "Vernon—our friend Lord Walgrave feels that it will be a satisfaction to himself to return you this money. You will do him a great favor by your acceptance of it: you will unhandsomely—I mean, ungraciously reject his friendship, by your not instantly placing it in your pocket-book."

"Thank you, thank you," said Walgrave, affected, "you have expressed my feelings exactly. Come, Mr. Vernon," and he came towards him, and pressed the packet into his hand, and continued in a subdued voice, "let me regain your good opinion—let me *deserve* to regain it. I will never again forfeit it, I promise you."

Vernon ruminated for a time with the packet in his hand. "By the bye," he said, at length, "what a most extraordinary circumstance it is, that I should never have thought of that woman! You spoke of her some time ago, I think—referred to her rather. Is she still living?"

"Of whom do you speak?" inquired Walgrave.

"Of Mrs. Maxwell, to be sure. What has become of her?"

"I have not seen her for some time," answered Walgrave. "She is, I suspect, not so prosperous as ——"

"Her friends could desire, as people say," interrupted Vernon; "and yet these persons bid high for fortune, too."

"Hang her! she's not worth talking about," said Moore rising.

"True," said Walgrave; "nor worth thinking about, either."

"And yet we frequently talk a great deal of those we do not care to think about," remarked Vernon.

"Good!" said Moore, motioning to Walgrave to retire.

"You see, our friend Vernon is mending apace."

"I am, indeed, very happy to perceive it," said Walgrave, and he extended his hand; "God bless you, Mr. Vernon."

"Well; and you," replied Vernon; "I shall see you again, Moore," and he retired abruptly.

"What do you think?" said he, addressing his sister as he entered the room, and producing the packet. "Lord Walgrave has returned me ten thousand pounds; I would not have taken it, but that—" he hesitated.

"We heard of it at the time," said Miss Vernon. "I am rejoiced, however —"

"We heard of it—ha! I recollect. Now Mary, I am going to do an act of justice. Part of this money belongs to another—the remainder is for you. I must see to that quickly. What a pity they had not lived, eh? I would have done something yet."

"What do you mean Horace?" said his sister.

"My God! I was forgetting myself again," exclaimed Vernon. "I won't think in that direction. Ha! Moore, I want you," he continued, as that gentleman opened the door. "Could you learn for me where Livingstone is?"

"Sit down, and compose yourself," cried Moore; "what do you want with Livingstone? You can have no business with him, I'm sure."

"Oh! but I have," said Vernon; "I want Livingstone; I must see Livingstone, and that, directly."

"Won't a letter do as well?" inquired Miss Vernon.

He appeared to reflect for a few minutes. "Yes, a letter would do; I could send to him, eh, Moore?"

"Much better," said Moore; "at present you must not see many people. Indeed, you could not see Livingstone, without going to him. I heard the other day, he was in the Fleet."

"In the Fleet!" cried Vernon, starting; "And what's become of—his wife, I mean; where is she?"

"Upon my word, I can't say," replied Moore; "with her friends, most likely." He drew out his watch; "I must go," said he, "I leave town to-night, till Monday."

"Will you call on Monday? you will see me then," said Vernon, taking his hand. Behold, Mary," and he put his sister's hand into that of Moore; "the best, the only friend I have in the world. I have none other such in the wide world. Reflect upon that; think upon it—I know you will."

"I am fully and deeply sensible of the value of Mr. Moore's friendship," said Miss Vernon.

"Oh! my dear madam, say no more, I implore you,"

cried Moore, in a deprecating tone; "Vernon will make me do what I have not done for twenty years—blush. I shall find you still better, when I call on Monday, I hope."

"Better! oh! how much better!" said Vernon with a sigh.

"Business, business—I must attend to that now," cried Vernon, when Moore was gone.

"To-morrow will do for that," remonstrated his sister; "you had better retire to rest now. I had forgotten: to-morrow will be Sunday."

"Aye, and so it will be," said Vernon. "To-night, then," and he drew out his pocket-book; "I shall sleep the better for it. Oh! my sister! if I had not neglected so many things, I need not dread sleep, as I now do. You know not what dreams I have had; worse than the truth—worse than reality—worse than death!"



## CHAPTER XIX.

"He is gone, indeed.  
The wonder is he hath endur'd so long:  
He but usurp'd his life."——

THE state of almost sullen abstraction in which Vernon was plunged during the forenoon of the following day, caused his sister to apprehend that he was about to subside into incurable and hopeless insanity. He, however, threw it off during the afternoon; spoke collectedly and with cheerfulness upon indifferent topics; studiously avoiding—a caution which Miss Vernon also observed—any reference to more painful and dangerous subjects. So beguiled, indeed, was his sister by these indications of amendment, that she instantly, and without suspicion acceded to his request, that she would leave him for half an hour; his plea being that he was fatigued, and that a short sleep on the sofa would revive him.

No sooner, however, had she retired to her own room, than Vernon stealthily stept into the passage, possessed himself of his hat and cane, and opening the street-door, cautiously, issued forth, running down the street with all the timorous speed of a truant school-boy.

Weakness soon compelled him to abate his pace; but still, as quickly as he was able, and with a strong effort to divert his mind from all outward impressions, he hastened on until he arrived at the gate of the Fleet Prison. Inquiring of the turnkey where Livingstone was to be found, he was referred to No. 11 in the second gallery, whither he proceeded; and knocking at the door, was requested simultaneously by three gruff voices, to "walk in"—a ceremony which was facilitated by the opening of the door on the part of one of the speakers.

"Is Mr. Livingstone here?" demanded Vernon.

"I can't say as he is, sir," answered the man, eyeing the interrogator with familiar curiosity; "but I'll go fetch him, if you like."

"Will you do me the favor?"

"Sure," said the other. "You're a friend, I hope, as is come to serve him. I'm sure I pities him, poor fellow! He's an upright man, that's what I calls him;" and having concluded this short but fervent out-burst of sympathy, which one prisoner is invariably found to extend to another, this benevolent individual requested Mr. Scholefield and Mr. Dixon, with easy politeness, to "walk their chalks" into the coffee-room, "seeing as how the gentleman might desire a colloquial conversation with Mr. Livingstone." This request the parties appealed to promptly obeyed, but in a very different spirit; Mr. Scholefield having inwardly satisfied himself that Vernon was a voluntary and benignant bail; whilst Mr. Dixon, on the other hand, would be upon his oath, and betted his companion, as they descended the stone steps, a pot of half-and-half upon the fact, that he was nothing more nor less than the detaining creditor.

The man returned in a few minutes, bringing Livingstone with him. "Here he is, sir," said he, and no mistake. I think I've brought the right 'un. Quite correct, I believe?"

"Bless my soul, Mr. Vernon," cried Livingstone, in astonishment.

Vernon knew the voice—the only thing appertaining to his former friend that could easily be recognised; Livingstone being clad in an old dressing gown and slippers, and having a fur cap on his head, a cigar in his mouth, and a three weeks' beard upon his chin.

"Shall I fetch up anything up, *now*, sir?" said the man, lingering at the door.

"Nothing, Snuggs, at present," said Livingstone. "By the bye, will you take something, Vernon?"

"Nothing," said Vernon laconically.

Snuggs retired with no slight inward displeasure, betaking himself to his friends, to compare notes touching the close-fisted screw in No. 11.

"I should hardly have known you, Livingstone," said Vernon: "you are much altered of late."

"And you too," said Livingstone; "but somebody told me you had been ill. An unfortunate business that—"

"Livingstone," cried Vernon starting up—"how dare you—but no—not a word about that—I must not—I will not—silence!"

"I beg pardon," said Livingstone; "I was not aware —"

"Of what?" demanded Vernon.

"I mean, I did not intend—but who thought of seeing you, my dear sir? I am sure this is an unexpected pleasure—a favor, I may call it,"

"Don't call it so, for it is not," said Vernon. "I want to see your wife, Livingstone. Where is she?—in town?"

Livingstone ventured an exploring, but timid glance at his companion, and hazarded an agreeable smile.

"Is your business with Mrs. Livingstone of a very particular nature?" said he, "for, unless it be, I fear I can hardly secure you so cordial a reception as—but, you know you were always a favorite in that quarter. I hardly know what to say —"

"Then the sooner you cease talking, the better," said Vernon shortly. "My business is very particular:—is that enough?"

"You must recollect," said Livingstone, with more confidence, "that you borrowed a considerable sum of my wife, which I am sure she lent you, not only without hesitation but with pleasure. Now since you deceived her in the repayment—" he paused, but Vernon was not disposed to interrupt him; "since you so grossly deceived her—"

"It is time that I should undeceive you," cried Vernon, with a look of disgust. "My object in wishing to see her, is to repay the money I borrowed—and with interest; and since my time is precious, if you do not choose to inform me where I may see her, I shall forward the money to her trustees."

Livingstone was unfeignedly surprised at this intimation. He sprang from his chair and approached Vernon, and taking him warmly by the hand, began to shake it most cordially. "My dear friend," he exclaimed, "why had you not said this at first, and spared me the utterance of any thing that might hurt your feelings. God knows, I am the last man in the world to do so. If you could

but know what I have felt on your account, since I heard of your misfortunes."

"If I did know, I should hardly believe it, I dare say," answered Vernon. "The time is past, Livingstone, for compliments on either side. I have but little time to spare, and must see Mrs. Livingstone immediately, if you please."

Livingstone, during this speech, had been laying the first stone of a castle in the air, out of the materials which Vernon had so unexpectedly furnished.

"See her! my dear sir," cried he; "and so you shall. You will find her in a very wretched lodging. Times are changed with us also, as you may easily conceive. But why—" he added, as if recollecting himself—"why need you see her at all? Surely, you can entrust it into my hands; the husband, you know is —"

"Not competent to sign a receipt for the payment of his wife's money. Oh, no, Livingstone—that won't do, that won't do."

The other eyed him in extreme doubt and perplexity. There was an expression in his eye which Livingstone had never before remarked—a wildness that formed an inexplicable contrast to the calm delivery of his words. Livingstone, to use the common phrase, was quite "taken aback;" but his interest, to which he was ever attending, but which he never could be said to study, pointed out to him the prudence of keeping this God-send snug, if possible.

"My old friend, Vernon," said he, in a tone of former days, "I have been treated most harshly by my creditors—cheated through thick and thin by them, I assure you. Now, there is no occasion, none whatever, why they should know any thing about this money."

"It is no business of mine to speak about it," answered Vernon; "all I want is, an acknowledgment from Mrs. Livingstone of the receipt of it."

"Excellent," cried Livingstone; "and that she will cheerfully give you. Do you know, Vernon, that this loan to you, as it turns out, was a most providential circumstance?"

"None of your cant," cried Vernon, rising; "give me your wife's address, and let me go."

"Oh! but it was," exclaimed Livingstone earnestly, laying his hand on his arm. "Why, one of the trustees

died about a month ago, insolvent; and the other has been gone to America these three weeks. I wish," he added with a sigh, "I had followed him."

"What use in that," exclaimed Vernon. "You couldn't make him refund. Ha! ha! this is good—capital! what a d——d world it is! Come, where does your wife live? Let me be off, for God's sake."

"I don't mean that I wanted to make him refund—far from it," cried Livingstone, flinging the end of his cigar from him; "far from it."

"You are, indeed," said Vernon bitterly. "Here is a pencil:—now, despatch."

"Ha! very good," cried Livingstone;—"sharp as ever, Vernon," and he took the pencil, and scribbled his wife's address—which was in a contiguous court. "I mean, that I wish I had followed his example. It won't do to be left in the lurch, will it? Besides, the thing's so often done, of late. D—— it, it's growing quite genteel."

"But now," he resumed, when Vernon was about to depart, "pray do me the favor to tell Mrs. Livingstone that I wish to see her, as soon as possible; and don't let this matter escape you. Will you promise me? Those creditors of mine are sharks, perfect sharks; and if I can but pass the Court before they know anything about this money, I can snap my fingers at them."

Vernon gave the necessary promise, made the best of his way to the lodging of Mrs. Livingstone, which he discovered to be quite as miserable a place as Livingstone, when he took leave of him at the gate, assured him he would find it.

Vernon caused the ancient knocker of the crazy door to perform, for the first time during its existence, the flourish of a double knock. A kind of scramble, succeeded by a whispering in the passage, ensued; and presently a middle-aged woman made her appearance.

"I want Mrs. Livingstone," said Vernon; "I come from her husband."

"Mrs. Livingstone! here—you're wanted," screamed the woman, following her own voice, at the same time, into a back room.

Mrs. Livingstone at length emerged from an heretogeneous apartment of faded finery. "Mrs. Mangles," said she, "be so kind as to light my candle. Thank you;" and as she approached the door with the flaming candle

in her hand, it was too evident that she had been participating with her friend Mrs. Mangles in a cordial.

She started back in unaffected astonishment.

"Mr. Vernon—I declare!" she cried in a high key; "can I believe the evidence of my eyes?"—a doubt, by the bye, which she might reasonably entertain. "How kind this is of you, dear Mr. Vernon, to come and see us in our distresses. We have been sadly put about. For my part, I wonder it has not laid me on a bed of sickness. And you, too—but pray walk up stairs to my little room. I am really ashamed to ask you," and she shrugged her shoulders, and lowered her voice, "into such a hole. But Mrs. Mangles is such a good soul!"

Vernon followed her up stairs in silence, and entering the hole in question, seated himself in a rush-bottomed chair, and produced his pocket-book.

Livingstone was wrong when he foretold for his friend the chance of a cool reception from his wife. Mrs. Livingstone was not what is called a bad-natured woman, for a very sufficient reason—she had long ago ceased to possess any nature at all. It is true, when she heard she would in all probability lose the entire sum she had entrusted to Vernon, she thought it a hard case, and "wondered how men could act in that way;" but the shortly subsequent insolvency and death of one of her trustees, and the flight to America of the other, had quite reconciled her to Vernon's conduct. In truth, if Mrs. Livingstone cared a rush for any human being in the world, Vernon was that person. That she had jilted one of the first bankers in London, was a source of honest pride to her; and she felt grateful to Vernon for having given her the opportunity of magnifying her consequence thereby; an opportunity of which she did not fail to take advantage; as Mrs. Mangles, who had planted herself on the stairs, for eaves-dropping purposes, might have testified. In a word, the poor *lady* was entirely destitute of mind—a mere creature of circumstances—formed and controlled by them; with no feeling but vanity, if vanity be a feeling; and who did not accommodate herself, but was accommodated, to any station of life in which it might please fortune to place her; as much at home, and perhaps more so, with the old woman on the staircase, as with the first lady in the first circles.

It happened, fortunately for Mrs. Livingstone's interest,

that just as Vernon was about to enter upon the business which had brought him to see her, Mrs. Mangles, unable to retain her equilibrium, rolled down stairs, and retired in confusion to her own room; whilst Mrs. Livingstone, having coolly remarked upon the curious nature of some people, and added, in a whisper, that her landlady was too partial to gin and Mr. Livingstone, prepared to give ear to Vernon's communication.

It was not merely astonishment that possessed her, when Vernon, in a few words, made known the cause of his visit, and of his previous call upon Livingstone, with all that had been said by that gentleman;—it was inconceivable to Mrs. Livingstone, that any man could be found to return money, unless it were his interest to do so—unless, in other words, he would lose more, in the estimation of the world, by keeping the money, than it was worth. Still more unaccountable to her was the fact, that Vernon should return it after the obloquy of “swindling her out of it”—which Livingstone had taken pains to promulgate—was incurred. Her wonder was, if possible, still further increased, when she found that Livingstone had not made stronger endeavors to possess himself of the money—of which she now suddenly resolved he should never touch a penny.

Mrs. Livingstone would have been affected by what she termed, and, indeed, considered, the romantic generosity of Vernon, but that the sum itself, so large and so unexpected, operated as a set-off against any feeling of that nature. She, however, strenuously wiped her eyes as she received the small parcel; and ejected a very passable sigh, as she signed a receipt for its contents—which she placed into her pocket, with a degree of care, plainly evincing that good cause must be shown before any portion of it would find its way out again.

“Oh, Mr. Vernon!” she said, “my boys—my little ones, must thank you for this—on their knees they must. Do let me bring them from the next room—they are not asleep, I dare say.”

“For heaven's sake, no, madam,” cried Vernon. “I would not for the world. I am happy the sum comes at an acceptable period. Be assured, it was always my intention to repay it.”

“We were always so certain of that,” returned Mrs. Livingstone. “Oh, Horace!—I beg pardon—I did not

mean that—Mr. Vernon, had I known your noble nature some years since—what I might have been!—I might have been a happy woman!—But, pray, forgive me.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” and Vernon laughed loudly. “Forgive you!—to be sure I will—for not marrying me. I do—I do, woman,” he continued, rising, and drawing the panic-stricken Mrs. Livingstone towards him. “Do you know to whom you are talking?—to a bankrupt!—to a villain!—to a murderer!—to a madman!—Do you know that?—”

“For heaven’s sake, do not frighten me so!” cried Mrs. Livingstone, excessively alarmed. “Surely, I have not offended you?”

Vernon loosened his hold of her arm, but said nothing, and sat down.

“What have I been saying?” he exclaimed suddenly, after a pause. “You look pale, madam—have I alarmed you?”

“Indeed you did,” answered Mrs. Livingstone; “but you are better now. Oh, Mr. Vernon! I am sure you would pity me, if you knew all I am compelled to suffer.”

“We are all compelled to suffer,” remarked Vernon, thoughtfully.

“Ah!” resumed Mrs. Livingstone, “but he has been such a shocking man to me—and I am told he has quite lost his character with the world.”

“Indeed!” said Vernon; “but the world judges harshly sometimes.”

“Not in his case, I fear,” said she, with a sigh. “Do you know, sir, were I to let him have this money, he would desert me and his children instantly—I know he would. He has told me so, often.”

“But who ever believed Livingstone?” said Vernon, quickly. “Yes, I did—and so did you.”

“To my sorrow,” cried Mrs. Livingstone; “and in this instance I believe him, also.”

“By the bye,” cried Vernon, suddenly, “he told me he wished to see you immediately.”

“He shall never see me more, Mr. Vernon,” said the lady, placing her hand in her pocket. “There are his children in the next room. He must keep them himself. I have done with him—I have. But, are you going, Mr. Vernon?”



"I am," replied Vernon, turning on his heel. "Good night, madam."

"God bless you, sir!" said Mrs. Livingstone, fervently, as he descended. "Mind the stairs—God bless you!—the latch pulls back—that's it—God bless you!"

Vernon rushed out of the court with precipitation. "And a creature like this," said he, gazing down Farringdon-street, "was able to blight my youth, and to destroy my manhood—and the wretch I left yonder, was a friend—my friend—the friend of Horace Vernon in his senses! Who would not go mad, to escape such friends? Thank God! I have done with them, and with the world in which they abound. But what am I," he continued, as he hurried along, "that I should set myself up for a censor of others?—I, who am the basest, the most pernicious villain that ever sought to forget his own crimes, by remembering the vices of others?—There—over there——" and he pointed towards the north, "are two who could convict me—but they are dead—yes, they are dead—and I live."

Muttering incoherently, he reached his own door. His sister, hearing his knock, had flown into the passage, and received him, as he entered, with an agitation which, at the moment, surprised him.

"Where have you been, Horace?" she inquired, as she wiped his forehead with her handkerchief. "You have dreadfully alarmed me. You must never go out again without my permission."

"I will go out no more," he said, seating himself. "I have accomplished an act, not to have done which, preyed upon my mind. It is done. I have repaid Mrs. Livingstone the money I borrowed of her—at a time when it was much wanted. I remember that she lent it to me. It is now paid."

"You have seen Mrs. Livingstone, then?" inquired Miss Vernon.

"Such wretches—both," said Vernon, covering his face with his hands, and shuddering. "God permits such to live. There are human reptiles, Mary Vernon."

"Do not talk so," said his sister, soothingly.

"How?" he inquired, in surprise. "You do not know much of the world."

"But little, indeed."

"Know less, and avoid the Livingstones," said he;

"they are cold, heartless, soulless. But I have a soul. Have I not a soul?"

"You have, my dearest brother," she answered earnestly.

"But not to be saved—not saved. What have you been reading there?"

"A book, which you must read shortly. You will find comfort—consolation in it."

"The Bible?" said Vernon. "No—I shall not. *They* are dead!"

Miss Vernon gazed at him in mournful silence.

"They are dead!" he repeated. "Will that restore them to life? You do not speak—then why do you tell me of comfort, and of consolation?—It is for you, Mary, to read that book—not for me—not for me."

Miss Vernon, knowing how futile it was to attempt to reason with him in a mood like this, resumed her reading, whence she ever and anon stole a glance towards him. He remained wrapt in gloomy silence for a considerable time, when he suddenly started up.

"I will go now," he said, seizing a candle.

"Where?—where will you go?" inquired his sister, following him.

"Where?" he echoed vaguely; "why, to bed, to be sure. I cannot stay here."

He looked into his sister's face, as she clung around him. It was full of pity and love, and mournful tenderness. He clasped her once closely to his bosom, and burst into a passion of weeping, so prolonged, so agonising, as to shake his entire frame with a hideous convulsion.

"It is here!" he exclaimed, interpreting her look; "here!" and he struck his heart with his hand: "the anguish here, Mary—it *is* anguish. Never—never will it go from me—from my soul."

"You will be better now," said Miss Vernon, endeavoring to lead him to a seat.

"Yes, I shall be better," said he, hastily. "This was foolish—it was weakness."

"Out of such weakness proceeds the best strength, my dear Horace," said Miss Vernon, who began to entertain hopes that nature, once relieved of the burden which oppressed it, would permit his reason to recover its strength. "You must not check such weakness, as you call it."

"I will not," he answered: but men must do these things alone. Pray for me to-night, Mary. You will, I know."

"You are quite composed again?"

"Quite—quite—much composed," he said. "Good night." He pressed his sister's hand fervently, and left the room.

He returned in a few minutes. He was very pale, but his face was perfectly calm and serene.

"Mary," said he, "I have not given you a kiss for many years;" and he kissed her forehead. "Oh! pray for me to-night. If I might pray to God, I would pray to him to bless you, Mary Vernon. Good night!—once more, good night!"

It was late when Miss Vernon retired to rest. She passed the door of her brother's room as she proceeded to her own chamber. She listened for a moment—all was silent. "He will sleep well to-night," she whispered; "and will be much better to-morrow."

Miss Vernon entered the breakfast-parlor at her usual hour the next morning. Her brother was not there. This caused no surprise; for he never rose early. She had waited a considerable time, when she started suddenly, and turned dreadfully pale. She remembered his words of the preceding night. She flew up stairs, and knocked loudly at the door. There was no answer. Again—and a third time—but no voice replied to her. Opening the door, she rushed, by a kind of instinct, to the dressing-table. An open sheet of paper lay upon it. A few incoherent sentences had been written, and they were addressed to herself.

She fell upon her knees, and prayed—not long, but earnestly and deeply—and arising, walked slowly, and with her hands clasped, to the foot of the bed.

His face was quite tranquil—immovable. One hand was stretched upon the counterpane of the bed, and by its side lay a small phial. Horace Vernon was no more!

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To deduce a satisfactory moral from the events of the preceding history, were by no means an easy task; at the same time, we are strongly of opinion, that a very sufficient one may be drawn from them, if the reader chooses

to take the trouble of finding it out. We confess we are glad that it is no longer the fashion amongst authors—because it is no longer countenanced by the public—to work out some trite common-place, which is dignified by the name of moral; a requisition—for so it formerly was—which at once precludes the author from offering the true circumstances of a history, and debars him from presenting a character in its true light. Vice does not always meet its due punishment; nor is virtue always, if often, triumphant.

It happens, however, fortunately for us, that the chief persons in our history have had partial justice done to them severally, or are in a fair way of having it dealt out to them; as a glance at their present position and prospects, which it is necessary to bestow at parting, will sufficiently prove.

In a few months after Lord Walgrave's expected visit to Mr. Hopwood, he led to the altar (we choose to employ the newspaper phrase, because the affair was blazoned at some length in those indispensable channels,) Miss Georgina Hopwood; upon which occasion the happy couple were accompanied by another equally happy pair—to wit, Captain Bouverie and Miss Agnes Graham, who, at the same time, underwent the same ceremony. Report whispers, that no perceptible change in their felicity is, as yet, apparent.

Mr. and Mrs. Hopwood still occupy their pleasant house at Egham: the former loses no opportunity of congratulating himself, and lecturing his friends, upon the practically exemplified virtues of the "system;" whilst Mrs. Hopwood, reconciled to the loss of her daughter, by the conviction that she has married well and happily, divides her time equally between her store-room and her drawing-room, as before. Lately, however, she has devoted a great portion of her time to the manufacture of articles of extremely fine needle-work; and was overheard, the other day, to express her hope and trust, that "Georgina would get safe over it"—a mysterious speech, which we leave it to the reader to expound.

Major Caisson, on his way to the office of the commander-in-chief, with a plan in his pocket, which, it was his firm belief, would have been gratefully and instantaneously adopted by his Excellency, was seized with a fit of apoplexy, and died before he could offer such verbal

explanation of his plan, as would alone have rendered it intelligible.

Mrs. Maxwell, deserted by her former friends, and unable longer to maintain that station in society without which, however equivocal it might be, existence became unendurable, was fain, at length, to accept an annuity from Captain Bouverie; soon after which she applied so assiduously to the brandy-bottle, that she brought on a brain fever, and after lingering in a mad-house for some months, expired.

Mr. Robinson, undaunted by former ill success, pursued his course with unabated rapacity and vigor; but having been convicted of conniving at the forgery of a will, he was, much against *his own* will, compelled to visit a portion of the world with which he was, hitherto, unacquainted; and where, it was the eminent judge's opinion, he should remain for the rest of his life.

Mr. Moore was recently returned to parliament for a considerable borough. He is unconnected with party, and *will* speak his mind; and being as incorruptible as Andrew Marvell, it is not believed he will ever get into place. He thinks, if they would but let him have his own way, he could set everything to rights in a very short time; and complains equally of Whigs, Tories and Radicals.

Messrs. Jeffries and Hunsman have been long engaged in a snug partnership transaction; in the carrying on of which, the legal knowledge of the one, and the business habits of the other, are of equal service and value. By a reference to acts of Parliament, the liabilities of incurring penalties on the part of licensed victuallers, omnibus drivers, and others, are legally set forth; and it is the business of Mr. Hunsman to "pull up" such thoughtless, wanton, or audacious individuals as offend against the law "in such cases made and provided;"—a business which Mr. Hunsman transacts with a genial earnestness that displays his fitness for the office.

Mr. Jeffries, however, prompted by a sense of the duty he owes to himself and family, manages, in addition, a small professional business of his own in the Insolvent Court; the only serious objection to which is, that it renders him peculiarly liable to colds. The pumps, in our metropolitan prisons, he considers greatly injurious to health.

Shortly after his emancipation from the Fleet, Mr. Livingstone succeeded in discovering the retreat of his wife, who had withdrawn herself quietly from her contiguous lodgings, with a determination of enjoying her own property in her own way. She was weak, or amiable enough, to permit herself to be prevailed upon to return to his protection, and to entrust her money in Mr. Livingstone's hands, which were at that moment full of business, that must inevitably secure a large fortune in "no time." The large fortune, however, literally came in *no* time; and Mr. Livingstone now holds, perhaps, the largest quantity of the least value of joint-stock shares, of any man in the kingdom. He may be seen in Bartholomew-lane daily, looking anxiously at the Share List, and hoping that some of them may soon arrive at par, preparatory to their rising to a premium; and he returns home every evening to a small house in the Ball's Pond road, and partakes of a late dinner, which has the merit of being a supper also. It is remarkable that, when the landlord makes a call, he seldom leaves the house in very high spirits; and the tax-gatherer is not entitled to that name when he waits upon Mr. Livingstone.

In conclusion, Miss Vernon, after much solicitation, was induced to give her hand to a nobleman who had been left a widower with a young family, and who had heretofore led a very dissipated life. His recent amendment is justly and generally (the words do not often meet) attributed to the influence of the lady, whose care and affection for the children might go far to remove the stigma which, whether with reason or otherwise we know not, has been almost universally attached to step-mothers.

THE END.















